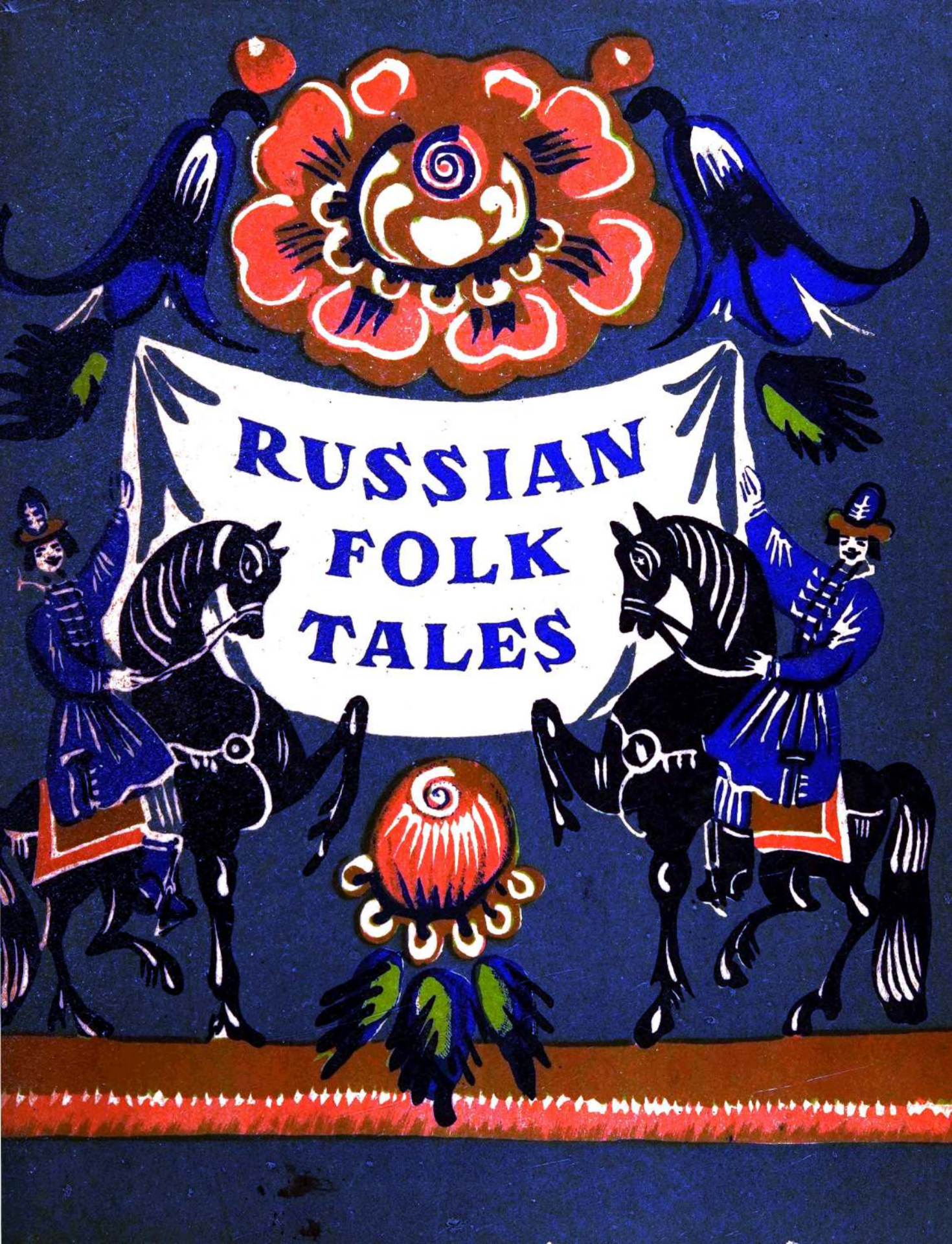
RUSSIAN
FOLK
TALES

FOLK TALES OF THE PEOPLES OF THE U.S.S.R.

Русские народные сказки

ИЗДАТЕЛЬСТВО ЛИТЕРАТУРЫ НА ИНОСТРАННЫХ ЯЗЫКАХ
МОСКВА

RUSSIAN FOLK TALES

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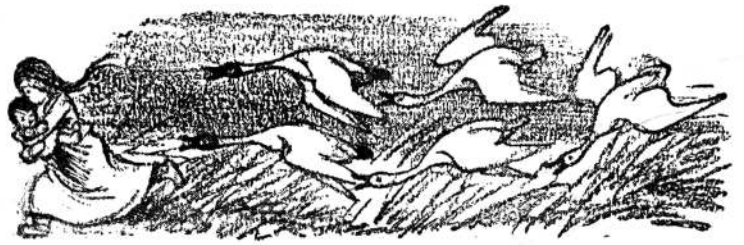

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RUSSIAN FOLK TALES

When you were very, very small, before you had even learned to read, you loved to listen to the fairy-tales Mother or Grandmother told you. Hundreds of times you went with Little Red Riding Hood into the hut where the bad wolf lay in Grannie's bed; together with the brave Prince you broke the spell the witch had cast over Sleeping Beauty; you climbed up the bean-stalk with little Jack and outwitted the fearful Giant.

As you grew older you did not lose contact with the gay, the well-wishing, the fearless characters from your favourite tales. You still met them in books, on the stage and the screen.

You discovered that every nation has its own fairy-tales. And while the tales of different nations resemble each other, they are at the same time widely different. It is not difficult to distinguish between English, French, Chinese, German, and Russian tales, because each describes the life and natural surroundings of the land to which it belongs and where it has been handed down from generation to generation. I suppose that you, too, when you are grown up, will tell your children the tales you heard when you were very small.

The Russian people have made up an endless number of poetic songs, wise sayings, ingenious riddles, and delightful fairy-tales.

In this book you will find stories told by Russians living on the banks of sweeping rivers, in the vast steppes, on high mountains, in dense forests.

Almost all of these tales were first told long, long ago. As they were retold, the tellers added new details and changed the old ones according to individual views and tastes. The older they grew, the more interesting and artistic they became, for the people polished and perfected them in the course of the centuries.

These tales have such poetic charm that the finest Russian writers, artists and composers have turned to them for inspiration. The great Russian poet Pushkin loved to listen to the tales told him by his old nursemaid, who had a gift for story-telling. "What a delight those fairy-tales are! Each of them is a poem!" he wrote. Fairy-tales are a poetic invention, but at the same time they reflect the real environment from which they spring. They tell of the people's hopes and aspirations, their desire to improve life and lighten labour; they show that the people have always believed in their own strength and in happiness which is sure to come.

Russian tales deal with the most varied subjects and in the most varied way. Soviet children know countless tales about animals, especially about the sly fox who gets the better of the stupid wolf and the clumsy bear.

These animal-tales were made up long years ago by hunters, who studied the beasts of the forest and found that each had character and individuality. They admired certain animals for their daring, despised others for their trickery. To-day these tales, like fables, have symbolic significance, exposing human vices and shortcomings, such as greed, cunning, and stupidity.

Most poetic and amusing are the wonder-tales. They transport us to the world of fantasy, to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands. It seems that these tales are based on nothing but imagination, nothing but invention. No ordinary laws govern the actions of the heroes of these tales, who battle with the powers of darkness represented by the dreadful Koshchei-the-Deathless, the Twelve-Headed Dragon, and the witch Baba-Yaga. Yet it is actual human dreams that these tales give expression to. Their heroes are the incarnation of the popular ideal. They are always fearless, courageous, noble, and invariably conquer evil. And they are always supported in their struggle against dark forces by maidens possessing magical powers, such as Vasilisa the Wise and Yelena the Fair. The touching heroine of the tale of "Fenist the Bright Falcon" is the very soul of goodness, devotion, and tireless effort: she wore out "three pairs of iron shoes, broke three iron staffs, and tore three iron caps" in her efforts to find her beloved. The same may be said about Alyonushka, who rescued her little brother from a dreadful fate, and diligent little Havroshechka.

The heroes of these tales boast such gallant assistants as Chestnut-Grey, the Grey Wolf, the Cat, the Dog, and the Pike. And they make use of magic

objects: magic caps and carpets, seven-league boots, and other things whose invention reveals man's age-old longing to conquer the forces of nature and make them serve his purpose.

Russians have also made up many tales which are a combination of real life and fantasy.

Although these fairy-tales were born in an age when the lord held complete power over his serf-peasants, whom he could sell, send to the army, or exchange for a hunting dog whenever he pleased, the poor peasant or soldier in the fairy-tale always triumphs over the cruel, greedy, and stupid landlord and his crotchety wife.

Such are the stories you will read in this book.

And you will also read a few *bylinas*, as ancient Russian epics are called. They have a peculiarly slow rhythm and are sung to this very day by certain peoples living in the Soviet Far North. Their heroes, called *bogatyrs,* boldly and selflessly defend their Russian land.

Grown-ups enjoy fairy-tales no less than children, for it is quite impossible to resist the charm of their heroes, the beauty of their language, and the force of their message, which speaks of love of country, faith in the strength of the simple folk, confidence in a better future and the triumph of good over evil.

E. Pomerantseva

RUSSIAN
FOLK
TALES

THE DOUGHNUT

Once upon a time there lived an old man and his wife.

Now, one fine day the old man said to his wife:

"Go along, old woman, scrape out the flour-bin and sweep out the corn-bin, try and scrape up some flour to make us a doughnut."

So the old woman took a fowl's wing, scraped out the flour-bin and swept out the corn-bin, and she scraped up two handfuls of flour.

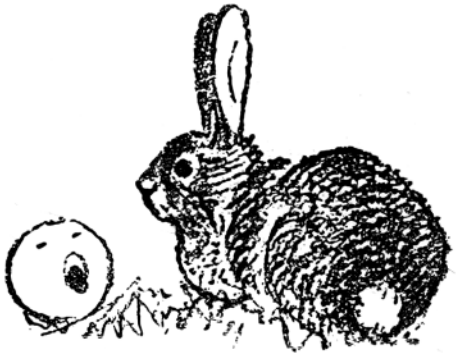
She made up the dough with sour cream, moulded the doughnut, fried it in butter and put it on the window to cool.

The Doughnut lay still for a while, but then it up and went rolling: off the window on to the bench, off the bench and down to the floor, over the floor to the door, then hop-skip over the door-step, through the passage, down the steps, into the yard and out of the gate, farther and farther away.

It rolled and rolled along the road till it met a Hare.

"Doughnut, Doughnut, I'll eat you up," said the Hare.

"Oh, don't eat me up, Hare. Let me sing you a song.



"I'm a Doughnut round,
I was baked and browned,
From a flour-bin scraped,
From a corn-bin swept.
I've sour cream inside,
And in butter I'm fried.
They left me to cool,
But I'm no fool!
Grandpa didn't get me,
Grandma didn't get me,
And you, Hare, won't get me either!"

And away it rolled before the Hare could blink an eye.
It rolled and rolled till it met a Wolf.
"Doughnut, Doughnut, I'll eat you up," said the Wolf.
"Oh, don't eat me up, Grey Wolf! Let me sing you a song.

"I'm a Doughnut round,
I was baked and browned,
From a flour-bin scraped,
From a corn-bin swept.
I've sour cream inside,
And in butter I'm fried.
They left me to cool,
But I'm no fool!
Grandpa didn't get me,
Grandma didn't get me,
The Hare didn't get me,
And you, Grey Wolf, won't get me either!"

And away it rolled before the Wolf could blink an eye.
It rolled and rolled till it met a Bear.
"Doughnut, Doughnut, I'll eat you up," said the Bear.
"No you won't, old Bandy-Legs!

"I'm a Doughnut round,
I was baked and browned,
From a flour-bin scraped,
From a corn-bin swept.
I've sour cream inside,
And in butter I'm fried.
They left me to cool,
But I'm no fool!
Grandpa didn't get me,
Grandma didn't get me,
The Hare didn't get me,
The Wolf didn't get me,
And you, Bear, won't get me either!"

And away it rolled before the Bear could blink an eye.
It rolled and rolled till it met a Fox.
"Doughnut, Doughnut, where are you rolling?"
"Down the road, as you see."
"Doughnut, Doughnut, sing me a song!"
And the Doughnut sang:

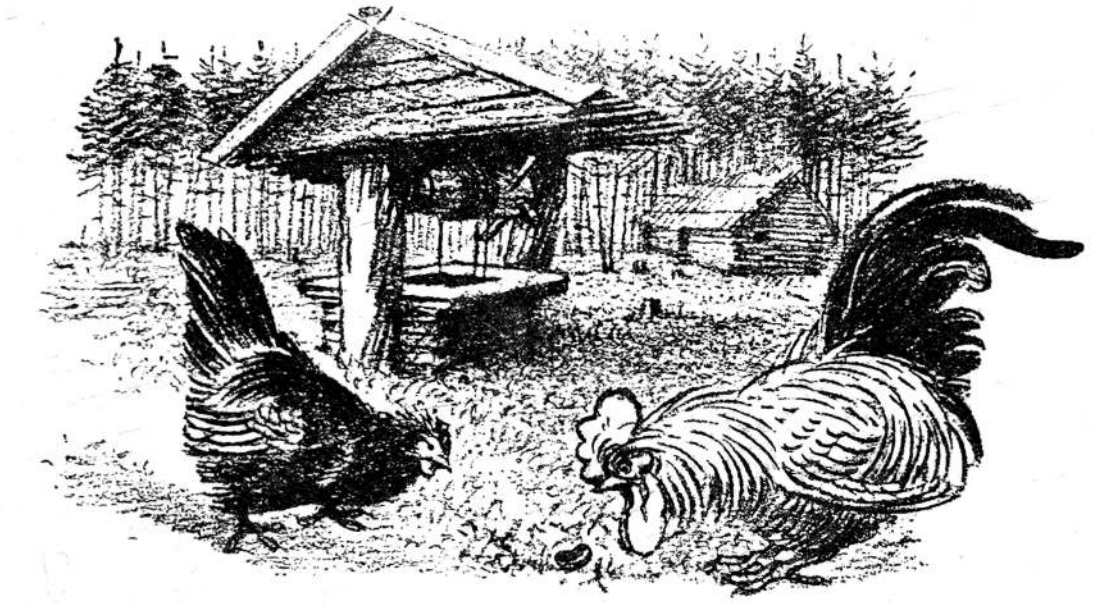
"I'm a Doughnut round,
I was baked and browned,
From a flour-bin scraped,
From a corn-bin swept.
I've sour cream inside,
And in butter I'm fried.
They left me to cool,
But I'm no fool!
Grandpa didn't get me,
Grandma didn't get me,
The Hare didn't get me,
The Wolf didn't get me,
The Bear didn't get me,
And you won't get me either, Foxie!"

And the Fox said:

"Oh, what a fine song! It's such a pity I can't hear well. Do get on my nose, Doughnut dear, and sing a bit louder, that I may hear."

So up jumped the Doughnut on to the Fox's nose and sang the same song a bit louder. But the Fox said:

"Doughnut dear, sit on my tongue and sing your song, it won't take you long!" The Doughnut hopped on to the Fox's tongue, and—snap!—the Fox gobbled it up.



THE COCK AND THE BEAN

There once lived a Cock and a Hen. One day the Cock was digging in the garden and he dug up a bean.

"Cluck-cluck-cluck, eat the bean, Hen," cried the Cock.

"Cluck-cluck-cluck, thank you, Cock," the Hen replied. "Eat it yourself!"

The Cock pecked at the bean and took one swallow and the bean got stuck in his throat.

"Please, Hen," he called, "go and ask the River to give me some water to drink."

So what did the Hen do but run to the River.

"River, River, give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

But the River said:

"Go to the Lime-Tree and ask for a leaf, then I will give you the water."

So what did the Hen do but run to the Lime-Tree.

"Lime-Tree, Lime-Tree, give me a leaf! I will take the leaf to the River, and the River will give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

But the Lime-Tree said:

"Go to the Peasant's Daughter and ask for a thread."

So what did the Hen do but run to the Peasant's Daughter.

"Peasant's Daughter, Peasant's Daughter, give me a thread! I will take the thread to the Lime-Tree. The Lime-Tree will give me a leaf to take to the River, and the River will give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

Said the Peasant's Daughter:

"Go to the Comb-Makers and ask for a comb, then I will give you the thread."

So what did the Hen do but run to the Comb-Makers.

"Comb-Makers, Comb-Makers, give me a comb! I will take the comb to the Peasant's Daughter. The Peasant's Daughter will give me a thread to take to the Lime-Tree. The Lime-Tree will give me a leaf to take to the River, and the River will give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

Said the Comb-Makers:

"Go to the Bakers and get us some buns, then we will give you the comb."

So what did the Hen do but run to the Bakers.

"Bakers, Bakers, give me some buns! I will take the buns to the Comb-Makers. The Comb-Makers will give me a comb to take to the Peasant's Daughter. The Peasant's Daughter will give me a thread to take to the Lime-Tree. The Lime-Tree will give me a leaf to take to the River, and the River will give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

Said the Bakers:

"Go to the Wood-Cutters and get us some fire-wood first!"

So what did the Hen do but run to the Wood-Cutters.

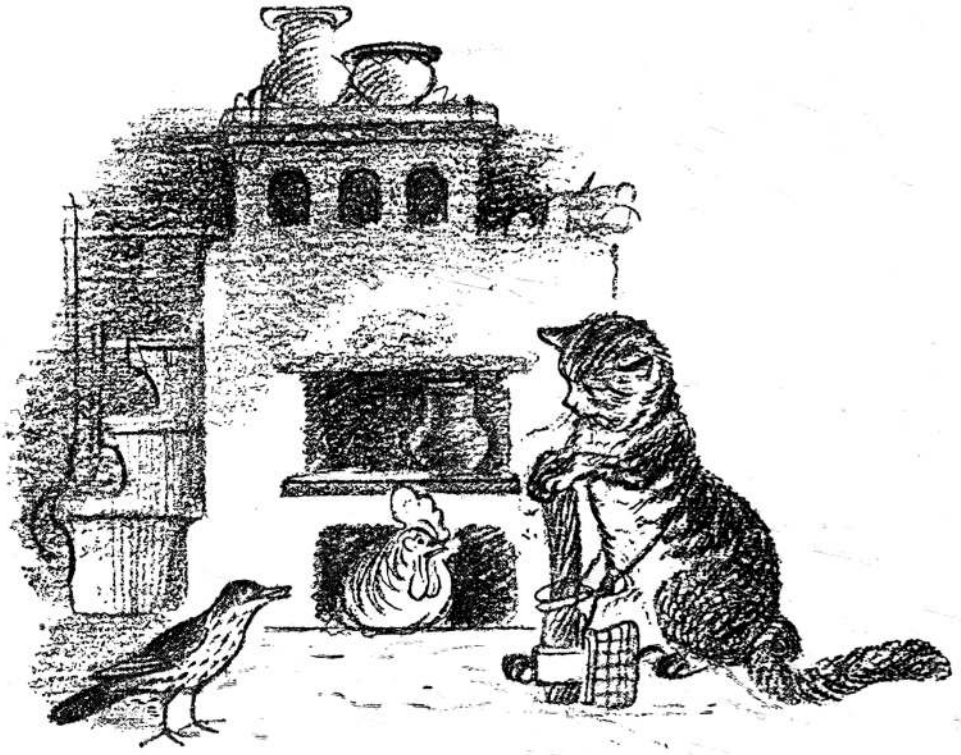
"Wood-Cutters, Wood-Cutters, give me some fire-wood to take to the Bakers. The Bakers will give me some buns to take to the Comb-Makers. The Comb-Makers will give me a comb to take to the Peasant's Daughter. The Peasant's Daughter will give me a thread to take to the Lime-Tree. The Lime-Tree will give me a leaf to take to the River, and the River will give me some water to take to the Cock, for a bean has got stuck in his throat."

The Wood-Cutters gave the Hen some fire-wood.

The Hen took the fire-wood to the Bakers. The Bakers gave her some buns to take to the Comb-Makers. The Comb-Makers gave her a comb to take to the Peasant's Daughter. The Peasant's Daughter gave her a thread to take to the Lime-Tree. The Lime-Tree gave her a leaf to take to the River, and the River gave her some water to take to the Cock.

The Cock drank the water and the bean went down.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo!" crowed the Cock.



LITTLE COCK-FEATHER FROCK

Once upon a time a Cat, a Blackbird, and a Little Cock lived in a little house in the forest. Every day the Cat and the Blackbird went deep into the forest to chop wood, leaving Little Cock at home. Before leaving they would warn Little Cock:

"We are going far away, and you must stay and keep house. But don't make any noise, and if the Fox comes, don't look out of the window."

When the Fox found out that the Cat and the Blackbird had left,

he hurried to the little house, sat down under the window, and began to sing:

"Little Cock,
Feather Frock,
With your comb so red,
And your glossy head,
Will you look out, please,
I will give you some peas."

Little Cock looked out of the window, and the Fox seized him and carried him off to his hole.

Little Cock cried:

"The Fox is taking me
Beyond the rivers deep,
Across the mountains steep.
Blackbird and Cat,
Come and save me!"

The Cat and the Blackbird heard Little Cock, ran after the Fox, and took Little Cock from him.

When the Cat and the Blackbird went to chop wood again, they warned Little Cock:

"Little Cock, don't look out of the window. We shall go very far to-day and may not hear you when you cry."

When they left, the Fox hurried to the little house and began to sing:

"Little Cock,
Feather Frock,
With your comb so red,
And your glossy head,
Will you look out, please,
I will give you some peas."

Little Cock sat still. So the Fox sang again:

"Boys and girls ran by to-day,
And scattered wheat upon the way.
The hens are pecking it in flocks,
But won't give any to little cocks."

Little Cock looked out of the window and said:

"Cluck, cluck, cluck, please tell me, Fox,
Why won't they give any to little cocks?"

Then the Fox seized Little Cock and carried him off to his hole. Little Cock cried:

"The Fox is taking me
Beyond the rivers deep,
Across the mountains steep.
Blackbird and Cat,
Come and save me!"

The Cat and the Blackbird heard Little Cock and started after the Fox. The Cat ran and the Blackbird flew. When they caught up with the Fox, the Cat scratched, and the Blackbird pecked, and they rescued Little Cock.

The Cat and the Blackbird again made ready to go deep into the forest and chop wood. They earnestly warned Little Cock:

"Don't listen to the Fox and don't look out of the window. We shall go much farther to-day and shall not hear you when you cry."

So the Cat and the Blackbird went deep into the forest to chop wood. Along came the Fox. He sat down under the window and sang:

"Little Cock,
Feather Frock,
With your comb so red,
And your glossy head,
Will you look out, please,
I will give you some peas."

Little Cock sat still. So the Fox sang again:

"Boys and girls ran by to-day,
And scattered wheat upon the way.
The hens are pecking it in flocks,
But won't give any to little cocks."

Little Cock sat still. So the Fox sang again:

"Many people passed to-day,
And scattered nuts upon the way.
The hens are pecking them in flocks,
But won't give any to little cocks."

Little Cock looked out of the window and said:

"Cluck, cluck, cluck, please tell me, Fox,
Why won't they give any to little cocks?"

The Fox seized Little Cock and carried him off to his hole beyond the rivers deep, across the mountains steep.

Little Cock cried and cried with all his might, but the Cat and the Blackbird did not hear him. When they came home, they could not find Little Cock.

The Cat and the Blackbird followed the Fox's track. The Cat ran and the Blackbird flew. At last they came to the Fox's hole. The Cat began to play and sing:

"I'll play a pretty tune,
For Brother Fox I'll croon.
Does my brother roam,
Or sleeps he in his home?"

The Fox heard the song and said to himself:

"Who is it that plays so well and sings so sweet? I must look at him."

The Fox came out of his hole. The Cat and the Blackbird seized the Fox and began to beat him. They beat him and beat him until he ran away as fast as his legs could carry him.

The Cat and the Blackbird took Little Cock, put him in a basket, and carried him home.

And to this day they all live happily in their little house in the forest.

THE FOX AND THE WOLF

Once there was an old man and his wife. Said the old man to his wife: "Bake me some pies, wife, while I put the horse to the sledge. I am going a-fishing."

The old man caught a lot of fish, a whole sledgeful. On the way home he suddenly saw a Fox lying in the road curled up like a ball.

The old man got off the sledge and went up to the Fox, but the Fox did not stir—just lay there as if he were dead.

"What a find! Now my old woman will have a collar for her winter coat."

So he took the Fox and put him in the sledge, and he himself walked ahead, beside the horse.

But the Fox watched his chance and on the quiet began throwing the fish off the sledge one by one, one by one.

When he had thrown all the fish off, he slipped away.

As soon as the old man got home, he called to his wife:

"Wife, I've brought you a fine collar for your winter coat!"

The old woman went up to the sledge, but there was nothing on it—no fish, no collar, nothing at all. Did she scold the old man!

"You dolt! You idiot! Trying to make a fool of me!"

Then the old man guessed that the Fox had not been dead at all. He took on about it, but what's done can't be undone.

Meanwhile the Fox had gathered all the fishes along the road into a heap and sat down to have his supper.

Along came a Wolf.

"Good appetite, cousin! You are dining, I see."

"What I eat is my own, and I'll eat it alone, thank you."

"Won't you give me just one little fish?"

"No I won't. Go and catch your own fish."

"But I don't know how."

"Pshaw, if I can do it, surely you can. Go down to the river, cousin, lower your tail into the ice-hole and keep saying: 'Hold tight, fish, up with a swish! Hold tight, fish, up with a swish!' And the fish will hold tight to your tail. The longer you sit there, the more you will catch."

So down to the river went the Wolf. He lowered his tail into the ice-hole and sat there, saying over and over again:

"Hold tight, fish, up with a swish!
Hold tight, fish, up with a swish!"

And the Fox walked round and round the Wolf, chanting:

"Twinkle, stars, dim and pale,
Freeze, freeze, the Wolf's long tail!"

"What are you mumbling there, cousin?" said the Wolf to the Fox.

"I'm wishing your tail a good catch," said the Fox, and off he went again:

"Twinkle, stars, dim and pale,
Freeze, freeze, the Wolf's long tail!"

All night long the Wolf sat by the ice-hole, and sure enough his tail froze fast. At daybreak he tried to get up, but could not. "My, what a lot of fish I've caught," he thought. "I can't even pull them out!"

Just then a woman came along with pails to draw water. "Wolf, wolf!" she screamed. "Kill the wolf!"

Try as he might, the Wolf could not pull his tail out. The woman dropped her pails and went for him with her yoke. She beat him and beat him, and the Wolf heaved and heaved until his tail came off and he took to his heels.

"You wait, cousin Fox," he said to himself, "you'll be sorry for this."

Now the Fox stole into the hut where this woman lived, ate his fill of dough out of the kneading-trough, smeared some of the dough on his head, then ran out, dropped down in the roadway and lay there moaning.

Up came the Wolf and said: "So that was how you taught me to catch fish, cousin Fox? Look, I'm black and blue all over."

And the Fox said: "Ah, cousin, you've lost your tail, but you've kept your head, while mine is all smashed. Look, they've beaten my brains out, and I'm on my last legs."

"So I see, cousin," said the Wolf. "Get on my back and I will carry you, poor thing."

So the Fox got on the Wolf's back and off they went.

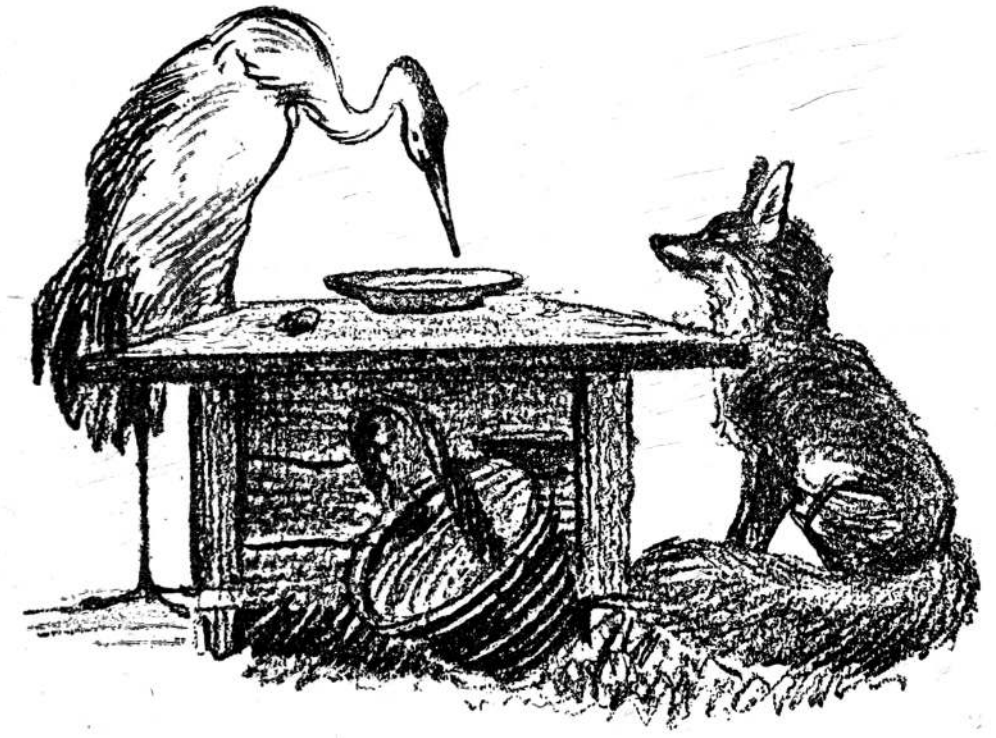
The Fox rode along on the Wolf's back and hummed a little tune:

"The hale one rides on the sick one's back,
The hale one rides on the sick one's back!"

"What are you mumbling there, cousin?" asked the Wolf.

"It's just a charm to take your pain away, cousin," said the Fox, and went on humming:

"The hale one rides on the sick one's back,
The hale one rides on the sick one's back!"



THE FOX AND THE CRANE

The Fox and the Crane became good friends.

One day the Fox decided to invite the Crane to dinner.

"Come and have dinner with me, my dear," he said. "I shall give you a splendid treat!"

So the Crane went to the feast. Now the Fox had cooked some porridge and spread it on a plate. He served it up and plied his guest: "I hope you like it, my dear. I have cooked it myself."

The Crane peck-pecked at the plate with her sharp bill, but not a morsel could she eat.

Meanwhile the Fox lapped up the porridge till there was nothing left.

Then he said: "Sorry, my dear, but I have nothing else to offer you."

And the Crane replied: "Thank you all the same, I have had enough. Do come and have dinner with me."

The next day the Fox called on the Crane. The Crane had made some soup for dinner and served it in a jug with a narrow neck. Said the Crane:

"Help yourself, my friend. It is all I have, I am sorry to say."

The Fox nosed the jug, licked it and sniffed it, but not a morsel could he eat. His nose was too big for the jug.

But the Crane pecked away until it was all gone.

"Sorry, my friend, but I have nothing else to offer you."

How angry the Fox was! He had thought to eat enough to last a week, but he came away hungrier than ever. It was tit for tat.

And that was the end of the friendship between the Fox and the Crane.

PEG-LEG BEAR

Once there lived an old man and his wife.

They planted some turnips, and a bad Bear began stealing them. One day the old man went out to look at his turnips and lo!—a lot of them were torn up and scattered all over the place.

So home he came and told the old woman about it. "Now who could have done it?" she said. "If a human being had pulled the turnips out, he would have made off with them. Most likely it's the pranks of a Bear. Go along, old man, and watch for the thief."

The old man took an axe and went out to keep watch all through the night. He lay down beside the wattle fence and kept still as a mouse. All of a sudden up came a Bear and began to pull the turnips out. He pulled out a great armful and started back over the fence.

Up jumped the old man, threw the axe at him and chopped off one of the Bear's legs. Then he hid in the bushes.

The Bear roared with pain and limped off into the woods on three legs.

The old man took the chopped-off leg and brought it home.

"Here, old woman," he said, "cook it."

The old woman skinned the Bear's leg and put it on to boil. Then she plucked the wool off the hide, sat down on the skin and began to spin the wool.

Meanwhile the Bear made himself a wooden leg and set out to take vengeance on the old man and the old woman.

His wooden leg creaked as he walked, and he growled to himself:

"Grrr, grrr,
Peg-Leg Bear,
People sleeping
Everywhere.
One old woman
Won't to bed:
She spins my hair
For woollen thread,
She cooks my meat
For her man to eat."

The old woman heard this and said: "Go out and bolt the door, old man, the Bear is coming."

But the Bear was already in the entry. He opened the door and growled:

"Grrr, grrr,
Peg-Leg Bear,
People sleeping
Everywhere.
One old woman
Won't to bed:
She spins my hair
For woollen thread,
She cooks my meat
For her man to eat."

The old man and woman were dreadfully frightened. The old man hid himself under the wash-tub on the stove-bunk and the old woman cowered behind him.

The Bear came into the hut and began to search for the old folks. But he fell through the trap-door and landed in the cellar.

Then the neighbours ran in and killed the Bear.

THE MUZHIK AND THE BEAR

A Muzhik went to the woods to plant turnips. While he was ploughing, up came a Bear and said:

"Muzhik, I'm going to break your bones."

"Please, Bruin, don't break my bones. Help me plant turnips instead. I will take the roots for myself and you can have the tops."

"Very well," said the Bear. "But if you cheat me, don't ever let me catch sight of you again!"

So saying, he went off into the greenwood.

The turnips grew big. In the autumn the Muzhik went to dig them out. And the Bear came out of the greenwood and said:

"Come, Muzhik, let us share the turnips."

"Very well, Bruin. The tops are yours, the roots are mine."

And the Muzhik gave the Bear all the leaves. The turnips themselves he piled into his cart and rode off to town to sell them.

On the way he met the Bear.

"Where are you going?" asked the Bear.

"I am going to town, Bruin, to sell the roots."

"Let me see what your roots taste like."

The Muzhik gave him a turnip. As soon as the Bear had tasted it he roared: "Aha! You have cheated me! Your roots are much sweeter than my leaves. Don't dare come to my forest for fire-wood any more or I'll break your bones."

The next year the Muzhik planted rye in the same place. When he came to reap, there was the Bear waiting for him.

"You won't cheat me this time, my man," said the Bear. "Give me my share!"

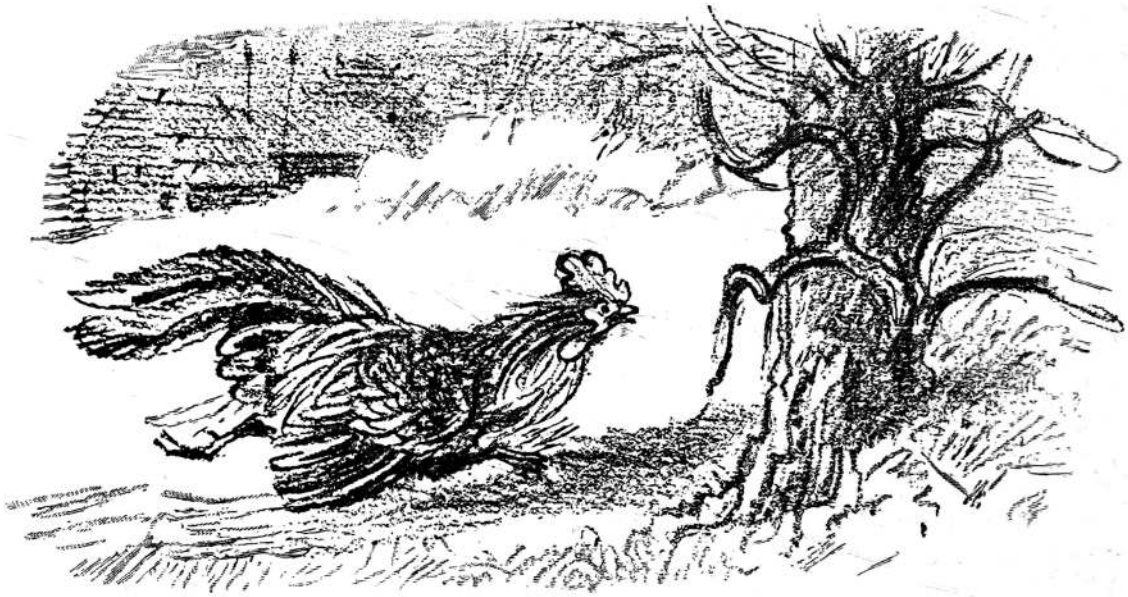
And the Muzhik said:

"So be it. You shall have the roots this time, Bruin, and I shall have to be content with the tops."

They gathered in the rye. The Muzhik gave the Bear all the roots, loaded the grain in his cart and carried it home.

The Bear chewed away at the roots but it was just like eating wood.

This made him very angry with the Muzhik, and ever since then the Bear and the Muzhik have been enemies.



THE ANIMALS' WINTER HOME

There was an old man and his wife, and they had an Ox, a Ram, a Goose, a Cock and a Pig.

Said the old man to his wife:

"Why should we keep the Cock, wife? Let us kill it for the holiday."

"Very well, let us kill it," said the old woman.

The Cock heard this, and when night came he ran off into the woods. Next morning the old man searched high and low, but could not find the Cock.

In the evening he said to his wife: "I could not find the Cock, I shall have to stick the Pig."

"Well, stick the Pig," said the old woman.

The Pig heard this, and when night came he ran away into the woods.

The old man searched high and low but could not find the Pig.

"We shall have to kill the Ram," he said.

"Very well, kill it," said his wife.

The Ram heard this and said to the Goose:

"Let us run away into the woods, otherwise they will kill us both."

So the Ram and the Goose ran off into the woods.

The old man came out into the farm-yard, and see!—the Ram and the Goose were both gone. He searched high and low, but could not find them.

"Well, I never! All the animals have gone; only the Ox is left. I'm afraid we shall have to kill the Ox."

"Very well, kill it," said the old woman.

The Ox heard this and ran away into the woods.

It is a blessed time in the woods in summer and the runaways felt quite at home there. But summer passed and winter came.

The Ox went to the Ram and said:

"Well, my friend, what do you say? Cold weather is coming, we must build a log hut."

But the Ram answered:

"I have a warm coat, the winter is nothing to me."

So the Ox went to the Pig.

"Let us build ourselves a log hut, Pig," he said.

"It can be as cold as cold for all I care," said the Pig. "I'll dig myself into the ground and do very well without a hut."

So the Ox went to the Goose.

"Goose, let us go and build ourselves a hut."

"No thank you. I have one wing for a blanket, another for a bed, and no frost will chill me."

So the Ox went to the Cock.

"Let us build ourselves a log hut."

"No thank you. I can just as well sit the winter out under a fir-tree."

So the Ox saw that he would have to shift for himself.

"Very well," he said, "just as you like, but I am going to build a log hut for myself all the same."

And he built a log hut for himself. When it was finished he heated the stove and lay there warm and snug.

Now winter came early that year, and the frost was very sharp. The Ram trotted about, but he could not get warm, so he went to the Ox.

"Baa, baa.... Let me into your hut!"

"No, Ram. I asked you to help me build it, but you said you had a warm coat and the winter meant nothing to you."

"Let me in or I'll smash the door and freeze you out."

The Ox thought it over: "If I don't let him in, he will freeze me out."

So he said: "All right, come in."

The Ram came into the hut and lay down on the bench in front of the stove.

By and by the Pig came running up.

"Grunt, grunt! Let me in to warm myself, Ox!"

"No, Pig. I asked you to help me build a hut, but you said it could be as cold as cold for all you cared, you would dig yourself into the ground."

"Let me in or I'll grub up all the corners with my snout and bring your hut down!"

The Ox thought it over: "Pig *will* bring the hut down."

So he said: "All right, come in."

The Pig ran into the hut and made himself at home in the cellar.

Then came the Goose.

"Honkety-honk! Let me in to warm myself, Ox!"

"No, Goose, I will not. You have two wings—one for a bed, the other for a blanket, and you can do very well without a hut."

"Let me in or I will pull all the moss out from between the logs and the cold will come through the chinks."

The Ox thought it over and let the Goose in. The Goose walked in and sat down in the chimney corner.

By and by the Cock came running up.

"Cock-a-doodle-doo! Let me into the hut, Ox."

"I will not. Go to your roost under the fir-tree."

"Let me in or I will fly up to the loft and scratch holes in the ceiling to let the cold in."

So the Ox let the Cock in. The Cock flew into the hut and perched on a beam.

And so they lived together, a merry family of five, without a single care. But the Wolf and the Bear got to know of this.

"Let us go to the hut," they said, "and eat them all up, and we will live there ourselves."

So they went.

"You go in first, you're big and strong," said the Wolf to the Bear.

"No, I am clumsy; you are quicker than I am. You go in first."

So the Wolf walked into the hut. The minute he came in the Ox caught him between his horns and pinned him against the wall. The Ram flew at the Wolf and butted him in the sides—thump, thump! Down in the cellar the Pig began to screech at the top of his voice.

"Grunt, grunt, grunt!
My knife is keen,
My axe is keen,
I'll pick him clean,
Be he ever so lean!"

The Goose pinched his sides and the Cock danced up and down on his perch and cried:

"Cluckety-clack,
Hold me back,
Or I'll skin him alive
Before you count five!"

The Bear heard the uproar and took to his heels. And the Wolf barely managed to tear himself away. He caught up with the Bear and said to him:

"What a narrow escape I had! They all but beat me to death. A great big fellow in a shiny black coat pinned me against the wall with an oven-fork. Then a smaller fellow in a woolly grey coat went for me hammer and tongs, I thought he'd break all my bones. And then a still smaller fellow in a feathery white coat pinched me in the sides with pincers. And the littlest fellow of the lot, in a bright red coat, danced up and down on a beam and cried:

" 'Cluckety-clack,
Hold me back,
Or I'll skin him alive
Before you count fire!'

"And somebody in the cellar screeched:

" 'My knife is keen,
My axe is keen,
I'll pick him clean,
Be he ever so lean!' "

Ever since then the Wolf and the Bear have kept away from the log hut.

And the Ox, the Ram, the Goose, the Cock and the Pig are living there to this day and having a merry time of it.

THE CUNNING MUZHIK

Once there was an old woman who had two sons. One died, and the other went off to a far country. He had not been gone three days when a Soldier came to the old woman and said:

"Let me in for the night, Granny."

"Come in, my good man. Where are you from?"

"I'm from the Other World."

"Think of that! My boy died not so long ago. You didn't see him there by any chance, did you?"

"Yes, I did. He and I shared the same room."

"Think of that!"

"He is herding cranes in the Other World, Granny."

"Ah, poor lad, it must be a worrisome job."

"That it is, Granny. You know what cranes are—for ever straying among the briars."

"And he's out at elbows and heels, I'll be bound?"

"You'd be surprised how ragged he is."

"I have some forty yards of cloth, my good man, and about ten rubles of money. Take it to my son."

"With pleasure, Granny."

Some time after that the old woman's son returned from his travels.

"Good day, Mother."

"Good day, son. A man from the Other World came here while you were away. He told me all about your dead brother. This man shared a room with him in the Other World. I gave him a roll of cloth and ten rubles to take to your dead brother."

"Well, if that's how it is, then farewell, Mother," said her son. "I'm going out into the wide world, and if I find a greater fool than you I shall come back. If not, I shall stay away."

And he turned and was gone.

He came to a village and stopped near the barnyard of the lord's mansion where a sow was browsing with her litter. The Muzhik went down on his knees and bowed to the ground before the sow. The lady saw this from a window and said to her maid:

"Go and ask that Muzhik what he is bowing for."

The maid went and said:

"What are you kneeling for, Muzhik, and why are you bowing to our sow?"

"Good woman, tell the lady your sow is thin, she's my wife's next of kin, so I am asking her to my son's wedding to-morrow. Will she let the sow come and be the matron of honour and her piglets the bridesmaids?"

When the lady heard this she said to her maid:

"What a fool to invite a sow and her litter to a wedding! Very well, let people laugh at him. Dress the sow in my fur coat and have a pair of horses put to a carriage. They shall ride to the wedding in state."

So they harnessed the horses to a carriage, seated the sow and her piglets in it, and gave the turn-out to the peasant. He got in and rode back.

When the lord came home (he had been out hunting), his wife met him, holding her sides with laughter.

"Oh, my dear, what a good laugh you have missed! There was a Muzhik here and he bowed to our sow. 'Your sow,' he says, 'is thin, she's my wife's next of kin,' so he asked for her to be the matron of honour and the piglets the bridesmaids at his son's wedding."

"I know what you did," said the lord. "You gave him the pig and the litter, didn't you?"

"I did, my sweet. I dressed the sow up in my fur coat and gave him a carriage with a pair of horses besides."

"Where does that Muzhik come from?"

"I don't know, love."

"It turns out that you're the fool, not he!"

The lord was angry with his wife for letting herself be fooled, and he ran out of the house, jumped on to his horse and galloped after the Muzhik. The Muzhik heard someone coming after him, so he turned the horses and the carriage into a thick forest and left them there. Then he took off his cap, put it on the ground and sat down next to it.

"Hey, you with the beard!" shouted the lord. "Have you seen a Muzhik hereabouts with a pair of horses and a sow with piglets in the carriage?"

"Yes, sir, I have. It's hours since he rode by."

"Which way did he go? I've got to catch him."

"He'll take plenty of catching. It's a good long way; you may go astray. Do you know these parts well?"

"Look here, my good fellow, go and catch that Muzhik for me."

"No, sir, that I cannot. I have a falcon sitting under my hat here."

"I will look after your falcon for you."

"Mind you don't let it out. It is a valuable bird. My master will make my life a burden to me if I lose it."

"How much is it worth?"

"All of three hundred rubles."

"Do not fear if I lose it, I will pay you for it."

"Fine words butter no parsnips, sir."

"I see that you do not trust me. Here, take three hundred rubles to be on the safe side."

The Muzhik took the money, got on to the gentleman's horse and galloped off into the woods, while the lord stayed behind to guard the empty hat. He sat there waiting for hours on end. The sun began to set, but still there was no sign of the Muzhik.

"Here, let me see if there is any falcon under this hat. If there is, he will come back, if there is not, it is no use waiting."

He lifted the hat, but there was no falcon under it.

"The rascal! It must have been the same Muzhik who fooled my lady."

He spat in disgust and footed it home. The Muzhik had reached home long before then.

"Well, Mother," he said to the old woman, "let us live together. You are not the most foolish person in the world by far. Look, they have given me three horses and a carriage, three hundred rubles and a sow with her litter—and all for nothing."

THE SEVEN-YEAR-OLD

Two brothers went on a journey, one of them poor, the other well off. Each of the two had a horse—the poor man a mare, the rich man a gelding. By and by they stopped for a night's rest.

In the night the poor man's mare foaled. The foal rolled under the rich man's cart. So next morning the rich man woke his poor brother.

"Get up, brother, my cart has foaled in the night," said he.

The poor man got up and said:

"How could a cart have a foal? It's my mare that foaled it."

"If she did, it would be lying beside her."

So they had a quarrel and went to law, and the rich man bribed the judges with money, while the poor man had nothing for the judges but the truth.

At last the matter reached the Tsar himself.

The Tsar had both brothers called to him and he set them four riddles.

"What is the strongest and swiftest, what the fattest, what the softest, and what the dearest thing in the world?"

And he granted them three days to think.

"Come on the fourth day," said the Tsar, "and give me your answers."

The rich man thought for a while and then he remembered his gossip and went off to ask her advice.

When he came she told him to sit down at the table and made him welcome. And then she asked him:

"Why so sad, dear gossip?"

"Oh, the Tsar has set me four riddles and granted me only three days to answer them."

"Come, tell me what they are."

"Well, here is the first. What is the strongest and swiftest thing in the world?"

"Riddle indeed! It's my husband's bay mare—there can't be anything faster—give her a flick of the whip, and she'll catch up a hare."

"Here's the second then. What is the fattest thing in the world?"

"It's a two-year-old boar we are raising. He's so fat already, he can't get up on his feet."

"Then here's the third riddle. What is the softest thing in the world?"

"Oh, that's a feather-bed, of course; could you dream of anything softer?"

"Well, here is the last. What is the dearest thing in the whole world?"

"My grandson Ivanushka, he is the dearest."

"God bless you, good woman, now I shall know what to say."

And the poor brother, he fell a-weeping bitterly and went home. At the door his seven-year-old daughter met him—she was all the family he had. Says the Seven-Year-Old:

"Why do you sigh and weep so, Father dear?"

"How can I help sighing and weeping when the Tsar has set me four riddles, and I'll never answer them in my life!"

"Tell me what they are."

"Well, daughter, here they are. What is the strongest and swiftest, what the fattest, what the softest, and what the dearest thing in the world?"

"Go to the Tsar, Father dear, and say to him: strongest and swiftest of all is the wind; fattest of all is the soil, for it feeds all things that live and grow; softest of all is the hand, for whatever a man lies down on, he always puts his hand under his head. And the dearest thing in the world is sleep."

And now both brothers, the rich one and the poor one, came before the Tsar. And the Tsar heard them out and he asked the poor man:

"Did you guess the answers yourself, or did anyone help you?"

"Your Royal Majesty, there's a daughter I have, a Seven-Year-Old, and she taught me the answers."

"If your daughter be so wise, take this little silken thread to her and let her weave me a fancy-work towel of it by to-morrow morning."

The poor man took the little silken thread and he came home as sad and sorrowful as can be.

"Woe is me, dear daughter," he said "the Tsar has bid you weave him a towel of this little silken thread."

"Do not grieve, Father dear," said the Seven-Year-Old.

She broke off a wand from the broom, gave it to her father and charged him:

"Take this to the Tsar and let him find a craftsman that can make of it a loom to weave the towel on."

So the man went to the Tsar and told him his daughter's wish. Then the Tsar gave him fifty and a hundred eggs and said to him:

"Give these eggs to your daughter and let her have fifty and a hundred chicks hatched for me by to-morrow morning."

The man came home still sadder and still more sorrowful.

"Ah me, daughter, one woe done with, another will rise." And he told her everything.

"Do not grieve, Father dear," said the Seven-Year-Old. And she cooked all the eggs and put them by for their dinner and supper. Then she sent her father to the Tsar again.

"Tell him the chicks need one-day millet for their feed. The field must be ploughed, and the millet sown, reaped and threshed all in one day. Or else our chicks won't even peck it."

The Tsar heard the man out and he said to him:

"If your daughter be so wise, tell her to come hither herself to-morrow morning—neither naked nor clad, neither on foot nor on horse, neither with gift nor without present."

"Well," thought the man, "this task is too cunning even for my daughter. All is lost now."

But the Seven-Year-Old said:

"Do not grieve, Father dear. Go off to the hunters and buy me a live hare and a live quail."

So the man went off and he bought a hare and a quail.

Early next morning the Seven-Year-Old cast off all her clothes, put on a fishing-net, took the quail in her hands, sat on the hare's back, and so rode off to the palace.

The Tsar met her at the palace gates and she made him a bow and said:

"Here is a gift for you, Tsar," and she held out the quail. And the Tsar was just going to take it, when—swish—it flew away.

"Good," said the Tsar, "you have done it all just as I ordered. Now tell me this. I know your father to be a poor man, so how is it you get your food?"

"My father catches fish on dry land, he sets no traps in the river's sand. And I bring them home in the hem of my dress and make fish soup that you'd like, o yes!"

"Why, you silly girl, where have you seen fish on dry land? They live in the water, don't they?"

"And you, clever man, where have you seen a cart to have a foal? It's the mare, and not the cart, that foals."

After that the Tsar had the foal returned to the poor man.

AXE-PORRIDGE

An old Soldier was going home on leave. He was footsore and hungry. Coming to a village, he knocked at the door of the first hut.

"May I come in and rest?" he asked.

An old woman opened the door.

"Come in, Soldier," she said.

"Have you anything to eat, good wife?"

The old woman had plenty of everything, but she was stingy, and so pretended she was poor.

"Ah, my good man, I haven't had anything to eat myself since yesterday!"

"Well, if you haven't, you haven't," said the Soldier. Just then he noticed an axe without a handle lying under the bench.

"If there's nothing else, an axe will do to make porridge of," said the Soldier.

The old woman stared at him.

"Porridge out of an axe?"

"Why yes, you just give me a pot."

So the old woman brought a pot. The Soldier washed the axe, put it in the pot, poured some water in and put it on the fire.

The old woman's eyes fairly popped out of her head.

The Soldier got out a spoon and began to stir the broth. Then he tasted it.

"It will soon be ready," said the Soldier. "A pity I have no salt."

"I have some," said the old woman. "Here, salt it."

The Soldier salted it and tasted it again.

"A handful of groats would be just the thing," he said.

The old woman brought a little bag of groats from the larder.

"Here, thicken it properly."

The Soldier cooked and cooked, and stirred the meal, then tasted it again.

The old woman could not take her eyes off him.

"Ah, that's a fine porridge," said the Soldier. "If we had a bit of butter it would be just the thing."

The old woman found some butter too.

They buttered the porridge.

"Take a spoon, good wife."

So they began to eat the porridge and could not praise it enough.

"Well, well," marvelled the old woman, "I never thought one could make such tasty porridge out of an axe."

And the Soldier went on eating and laughing up his sleeve.

DEATH AND THE SOLDIER

A Soldier, after serving for twenty-five years, was discharged.

"You have served your term, Soldier, and now you are free to go wherever you like."

So the Soldier went, thinking: "I have served the Tsar for twenty-five years and I have not even twenty-five turnips to show for it. They have only given me three dry crusts for the journey. What am I to do? Where can a Soldier lay his head? Ah, well, I will go home and look up my father and mother, and if they are dead, then at least I will sit a while by their grave."

So the Soldier set off homewards. He walked and walked, and ate up two crusts, leaving only one, though he still had a long way to go.

He met a beggar, who said:

"Could you give a poor cripple something, Soldier?"

The Soldier took out his last crust and gave it to the old beggar, thinking: "I will manage somehow. A Soldier can feed himself somehow, but what can he do—a helpless old man and a cripple?"

So he filled his pipe, lighted up, and started off again. On he went, puffing at his pipe.

He walked and walked till he came to a lake by the roadside. Wild geese were swimming about close to the shore. The Soldier crept up, waited for his chance, and killed three geese.

"Now I shall have something for dinner!"

He struck out down the road and before long came to a town. He sought out an inn, gave the innkeeper the three geese, and said:

"Here are three geese. Roast one for me, take another for your trouble, and serve me *braga* with my dinner for the third."

By the time the Soldier had taken off his haversack and made himself comfortable, dinner was ready.

The roast goose was served with a bottle of *braga*. The Soldier set to—first a swig of *braga*, then a bite of roast goose. Not bad!

He took his time. "Whose new mansion is that across the street?" he asked the innkeeper.

"The richest merchant in the town built that mansion for himself, but he cannot move in, much as he wants to," replied the innkeeper.

"How is that?"

"The place is haunted by evil spirits. It swarms with devils—in the night-time they screech and dance and make a horrible din. People are afraid to go near it after dark."

The Soldier asked the innkeeper where he could find the Merchant.

"I should like to meet him and have a word with him. I may be able to help him."

After dinner he lay down for a nap, and when dusk began to fall, he went out. He found the Merchant, who said:

"What can I do for you, Soldier?"

"I am a wayfarer. Will you let me spend the night in your new house? I have heard that it is empty."

"You must be mad," said the Merchant. "Are you weary of life? Find some other lodging. There are plenty of houses in the town. My new house has been haunted by devils ever since I built it, and nothing can drive them out."

"Perhaps I will be able to drive the devils out. Who knows, maybe the evil spirits will take orders from an old Soldier."

"Other brave men had tried, but in vain. Nothing can be done. There was a traveller last year who, like you, tried to rid the house of evil spirits and made so bold as to spend the night there. But all we found the next morning were his bones. The evil spirits killed him."

"No fire will consume, no water will drown a Russian Soldier. I have served for twenty-five years, fighting in all sorts of battles and campaigns, and am still alive to tell the tale. So I dare say I shall get the best of those devils."

"Well, you know best," said the Merchant. "Go, if you are not afraid. And if you rid the house of the evil spirits I shall reward you handsomely."

"Give me some candles, some roasted nuts and a baked turnip—the biggest you have," said the Soldier.

"Come into the shop and take whatever you need."

The Soldier went into the shop, took a dozen candles and three pounds of roasted nuts, then went into the Merchant's kitchen, picked out the biggest baked turnip he could find and went off to the new house.

On the stroke of midnight there suddenly arose a hullabaloo; doors slammed, floor-boards creaked, and a mad dance began with screeches

and shrieks loud enough to wake the dead. The whole place was topsy-turvy.

But the Soldier sat there cool as you like, cracking nuts and puffing at his pipe.

All of a sudden the door opened and a devilkin poked his head in, saw the Soldier and shrieked:

"There's a man here! Come along, we'll have a feed!"

All the devils came thumping into the room where the Soldier sat. They crowded in at the door, peeped at the Soldier, nudged each other and squealed:

"We'll tear him to bits! We'll eat him up!"

"Don't be so cock-sure," said the Soldier. "I've met uglier customers in my time and have given them all a good walloping. Mind I don't stick in your throat!"

At this the biggest devil—the Devil-in-Chief—pushed his way forward and said:

"Let's measure our strength."

"All right, let's," said the Soldier. "Can any of you squeeze a stone in his hand until the juice runs out?"

The Devil-in-Chief gave orders for a cobble-stone to be brought from the street. One of the devilkins ran out and fetched it. He handed it to the Soldier and said:

"Here, try it!"

"Let one of you try first, my turn can wait."

The Devil-in-Chief seized the stone and squeezed it so hard that nothing but a handful of sand remained.

"See that!"

The Soldier took the turnip out of his haversack.

"Look, my stone is bigger than yours."

And he squeezed the turnip till the juice ran out.

"See that!"

The devils stood aghast. When they found their tongues they said:

"What are you eating all the time?"

"Nuts," said the Soldier. "But none of you can crack my nuts."

And he handed the Devil-in-Chief a bullet.

"Here, try a Soldier's nut."

The Devil popped it into his mouth. He bit it until it was flat, but he could not bite it through. And the Soldier went on cracking his nuts, throwing them into his mouth one after another, one after another.

The devils were very crest-fallen. They stood shuffling about uneasily, glancing at the Soldier.

"I've heard tell that you fellows are good at tricks," said the Soldier. "You can change yourselves from little ones into big ones, and from big ones into little ones, and slip through the tiniest crack."

"Aye, that we can!" cried the devils.

"Just see if you can crawl into my haversack, the whole lot of you."

The devils made a scramble for the haversack, jostling and pushing each other in a great hurry. In less than a minute the house was empty. All the devils were tucked away in the haversack.

The Soldier closed it, laid the straps crosswise, drew them tight and buckled them.

"Now I can have a nap," he said.

He lay down soldierwise, his greatcoat serving as bed and blanket, and went to sleep.

The next morning the Merchant sent his shopmen down.

"Go and see whether the Soldier is alive. If he's dead, gather up his bones."

The shopmen came and found the Soldier strolling through the rooms, smoking his pipe.

"Good morning, Soldier. We hardly hoped to find you alive and well. See, we have brought a box to gather your bones in."

The Soldier chuckled.

"It takes a lot to kill me. Here, help me carry this haversack to the smithy. Is the smithy far from here?"

"Not far at all," replied the shopmen.

And they picked up the haversack and carried it to the smithy. The Soldier said to the smiths:

"Now then, my good lads, put this haversack on the anvil and give it a good hammering."

The smith and his apprentice laid about them lustily with sledge and hammer.

Those devils had a bad time of it, you may be sure.

"Have mercy, Soldier, let us out!" they shouted in one voice.

But the smiths went on hammering, and the Soldier egged them on:

"Go it, lads, harder, harder! We'll teach them to pester people so!"

"We shan't set foot in that house again as long as we live!" the devils cried. "And we'll warn all others to keep clear of this town. We'll reward you well if you only spare our lives!"

"Now you're talking! Next time you'll know better than to tackle a Russian Soldier!"

He told the smiths to lay off. Then he loosened the straps on the haversack and let the devils out one by one, all except the Devil-in-Chief:

"I won't let him out till you bring the reward."

Scarcely had he finished his pipe when he saw an imp scurrying back with an old wallet in his hand.

"Here is your reward!" said the imp.

The Soldier took it and thought it rather light. He opened it, looked inside and found it empty.

"Trying to make a fool of me?" the Soldier shouted at the imp. "You wait, we'll teach your Chief a lesson with two hammers!"

At that the Chief cried out from inside the haversack:

"Do not beat me, Soldier, do not hurt me, but listen to what I say. That wallet is not what it seems; it is a wishing wallet—the only one in the world. Make a wish and then look inside, and you will see that your wish has been granted. Should you wish to catch a bird or own a pig or anything else, just wave the wallet and say three words: 'In you go!'—and you will find it there."

"We'll try it and see whether you are telling the truth," said the Soldier, thinking to himself:

"I wish there were three bottles of *braga* in the wallet." No sooner had he wished it than he felt the wallet grow heavier. Opening it up, what should he see but three bottles of *braga*! He gave them to the smiths.

"Have a drink, my good fellows!"

He went outside and glanced about. He saw a sparrow sitting on the roof. So he waved his wallet and said:

"In you go!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when the sparrow flew straight into the wallet.

The Soldier came back to the smithy and said:

"You have told the truth. You have been honest with me. A wallet like this will come in useful to an old Soldier."

So he undid the haversack and let out the Devil-in-Chief.

"Now be off with you, but remember this: if ever I catch sight of you again, you will have only yourself to blame for what happens."

The Devil and his devilkins were gone in a twinkling. The Soldier took his haversack and the wishing wallet, said good-bye to the smiths, and went back to the Merchant.

"You can move into your new house now," he said. "No one will trouble you any more."

The Merchant stared at the Soldier and could hardly believe his eyes.

"Truly, no fire will consume, no water will drown a Russian Soldier. Tell me how you managed to worst the evil spirits and escape safe and sound?"

The Soldier told him all that had happened, and the shopmen confirmed it. Thought the Merchant:

"I had better tarry a day or two before moving in. Better make sure that the place is quiet now and the evil spirits will not come back again."

That evening he told the fellows who had been to the house that morning to go back there with the Soldier.

"Spend the night there," he told them. "In case of anything the Soldier will protect you."

They spent the night undisturbed, and the next morning came back safe and sound and as cheerful as could be.

The third night the Merchant himself made bold to spend the night with them. All went well again. They slept peacefully. After that the Merchant had the house tidied up and made preparations to hold a house-warming. Heaps of good things were baked, boiled and roasted. When the guests arrived the tables were loaded so heavily with food and wines that they fairly groaned. Eat and drink whatever you wish!

The Merchant seated the Soldier in the place of honour and treated him as his dearest guest.

"Help yourself, my good man," he said. "You have done me a service I shall not forget as long as I live."

It was dawn when they stopped feasting and went to bed. When they woke up, the Soldier made ready to go on his way. The Merchant urged him to stay.

"What is your hurry? Live with us. Stay another week at least."

"No, thanks. I have stayed too long as it is. I must be getting home."

The Merchant filled the Soldier's haversack with silver.

"This is to help you set up on your own."

But the Soldier said:

"I do not need your silver. I am a single man and still sound in mind and body. I can make my own living."

He took his leave of the Merchant, slung his wishing wallet and empty haversack over his shoulder and went on his way.

It is hard to say how far he went, but at last he came to his home country. He caught sight of his village from a hill-side and his heart grew light and happy. He quickened his step, glancing the while from side to side. "How beautiful it is all around. I have been in many lands, seen many cities and villages, but in all the wide world there is no place like home."

The Soldier came to his cottage. He climbed the porch steps and knocked. An old, old woman opened the door, and the Soldier embraced her tenderly.

The old woman recognized her son. She laughed and cried with joy.

"The old man kept talking about you, son, but alas! he did not live to see this day. It is five years since we buried him." Then the old woman broke off and set to work, while the Soldier comforted her:

"You will have no more cares. Now it is up to me to look after your wants and comfort."

He opened the wallet and wished for all kinds of foods and dainties.

He took them all out of his wallet, and put them on the table, saying to his mother:

"Eat and drink as much as you like!"

The next day he opened the wallet again and wished it full of silver. Then he got down to work. He put up a new house, bought a cow and a horse and everything that was needed in the household. Then he wooed a maid, married her, and settled down to work his farm.

His old mother nursed her grandchildren and found endless joy in her son's good fortune.

Some six or seven years went by in this wise. Then one day the Soldier fell ill. He lay in bed three days and could not eat or drink. Things went from bad to worse. On the third day he saw Death at his bedside sharpening his scythe and glancing every now and then at the Soldier.

"Come along, Soldier," Death said, "I have come for you. I am going to snatch you away."

"What's the hurry?" said the Soldier. "Let me live another thirty years or so. I will bring up my children, marry off my sons and daughters, live to see my grandchildren and stay with them a while. After that you can come for me. I cannot afford to die just now."

"Nay, Soldier, I shall not give you even three more hours of life."

"Well, if I cannot have another thirty years, make it at least three. I still have a lot of things to see to."

"I shall not give you even three minutes," answered Death.

The Soldier did not plead any more, but he was most unwilling to die. Somehow he managed to get his wishing wallet out from under his pillow, and he waved it, shouting:

"In you go!"

The words were scarcely out of his mouth when he began to feel better. He looked at the spot where Death had stood, but he was no longer there. Then he looked into the wallet, and who should be sitting there but Death.

The Soldier shut the wallet tight and felt quite well again; even his appetite returned.

He got out of bed, cut himself a slice of bread, salted it and ate it. Then he drank a mug of *kvass* and was quite his old self again.

"So you did not want to come to terms with me, Noseless One. In the future you'll know better than to run foul of a Russian Soldier!"

"What are you going to do with me?" came a voice from inside the wallet.

"I'm sorry to lose the wallet, but it cannot be helped," replied the Soldier. "I am going out to drown you in the muddy marsh, and you will not be able to get out of the wallet as long as you live."

"Let me out, Soldier. I will give you three more years of life."

"No fear, I am not going to let you out now."

"Do let me out," pleaded Death. "If you do, I'll let you live another thirty years."

"Very well," said the Soldier, "I will let you out on one condition —that you promise not to take anyone's life in all those thirty years."

"I cannot make such a promise," said Death. "How shall I live if I am not to take anyone's life?"

"Live on roots, bark, and stones those thirty years."

Death made no answer. So the Soldier dressed and put on his boots and said:

"Since you do not accept my proposal, I am going to take you down to the muddy marsh."

And he picked up the wallet.

At this Death spoke up:

"Very well, have it your way. I shall not take anyone's life for thirty years. I shall live on roots, bark, and the stones in the fields, only let me out."

"Mind, no cheating," said the Soldier.

He carried Death outside the village and opened the wallet.

"Go before I change my mind!" he said.

Death snatched up his scythe and scampered off into the woods, where he searched for roots, bark, and the stones in the fields to live on. What else could he do?

Never had people been so happy: no one got sick and no one died.

Things went on like this for nearly thirty years.

Meantime the Soldier's children grew up. His sons and daughters married. The family became a large one. This one needed help, the other advice, the third had to be taught sense, and each had to be set up in life.

The Soldier was kept busy and was happy as the day is long. He had luck in everything, and life spun on like a wheel. He worked so hard that you can be sure he never gave Death a thought.

But one day Death turned up, large as life.

"The thirty years end to-day. Your time is up. Come along, Soldier, I have come for you."

The Soldier did not argue.

"I am a Soldier—up and ready at the first call. If my time has come, bring the coffin."

Death fetched an oaken coffin with iron clamps. He lifted the lid and said:

"Get in, Soldier."

The Soldier flew into a rage.

"Don't you know how things are done?" he cried. "A Soldier cannot be expected to do things in such a slap-dash way. In the army, when the sergeant-major taught us anything new, he would first show us how to do it himself, and then we would repeat it at his command. And you must do the same. You show me first what is to be done and then give the command."

Death crawled into the coffin.

"See, Soldier, this is how you must lie down—with your legs stretched out and your hands folded on your breast."

That was just what the Soldier was waiting for. He banged the lid down and fastened the clamps.

"Lie there yourself," he said. "I am quite comfortable here."

He dumped the coffin into a cart, trundled it down a steep bank and threw it into the river.

The river caught the coffin up and swept it out into the sea. And for years and years Death drifted on the sea.

Again people were happy and sang the Soldier's praises. And the Soldier himself did not grow older. He saw his grandsons and granddaughters married and he taught his great-grandchildren what they should do. He was busy about the house and farm from morn till night and nothing seemed to tire him.

Now it happened that a violent storm rose at sea. The waves smashed the coffin against the cliffs. Death crawled ashore more dead than alive, tottering in the wind.

He lay on the sea-shore a bit to get his breath, then staggered off to the village where the Soldier lived. Into the Soldier's farm-yard he went and hid himself, thinking to waylay the Soldier when he came out.

Now the Soldier was getting ready to go out to sow his field. He took an empty sack and set out for the barn for seed. Just as he got to the barn, Death came out of his hiding-place.

"You won't escape me this time!" he grinned.

The Soldier saw he was in a tight corner, so he thought:

"Ah well, we must take the rough with the smooth. If I cannot get rid of the Noseless One, at least I can frighten him."

And he whisked out the empty sack from under his coat and yelled:

"So it's the wallet you want again, do you? A little taste of the muddy marsh, eh?"

Death saw the empty sack in the Soldier's hands and was so terrified that he took it for the wishing wallet and rushed away.

His only fear was lest he be seen by the Soldier. "If he sees me, there'll be no escaping the muddy marsh," he thought.

And from that time on, Death has taken people's lives by stealth.

The Soldier lived happily ever after, and folks say he is still alive and still enjoying himself.

THE GOSSIPY WIFE

Once there was a peasant and his wife. The woman was ever such a gossip—she could never keep a secret. The moment she heard anything the whole village got to know of it.

One day the man went to the woods. As he was digging a wolf trap, he found buried treasure. The man said to himself: "Now what shall I do? As soon as my wife finds out about this treasure she'll spread the news all over the place. The landlord will get to hear about it, and it will be good-bye to my money—he will take it all away."

He thought and thought, and at last hit upon an idea. He buried the treasure, marked the spot and went homewards. When he came to the river he looked over his net and found a pike wriggling in the meshes. The man took the pike out and went on. Soon he came to a trap he had set and found a hare in it.

The peasant took the hare out of the trap and put the pike in its place. Then he took the hare and put it in the net.

It was after dark when he got home.

"Well, Tatiana, heat up the stove and fry a lot of pancakes."

"What for? Who ever heard of lighting a stove at nightfall? And who fries pancakes so late? What will you be wanting next?"

"Do as you're told without arguing. I have found buried treasure, Tatiana, and we must fetch it home to-night."

His wife was as pleased as pleased could be. She lighted the stove in a trice and began to fry pancakes.

"Eat them while they're hot, husband," she said.

The man ate one pancake and slipped two or three into his wallet, ate another and slipped two or three more into his wallet, without his wife's knowing.

"You *are* wolfing down the pancakes to-day! I cannot fry them fast enough," said his wife.

"We have a long way to go and the treasure is heavy, so I must eat a hearty meal."

The man stuffed his wallet full of pancakes and said:

"Well, I have had my fill. Now eat some yourself and let us be going. We must hurry."

The wife ate hastily and off they went.

It had grown dark by this time. The man walked ahead of his wife and he began to take pancakes out of his wallet and hang them on the boughs of trees.

By and by his wife spied the pancakes.

"Look, there are pancakes on the trees!"

"What of it?" said her husband. "Didn't you see it raining pancakes just now?"

"No, I had my eyes on the ground so as not to stumble over the roots."

"I have set a trap for hares here," said the man. "Let us go and have a look."

So they went to the trap and the man took out the pike.

"How could a fish ever have got into that trap?" asked his wife.

"Didn't you know? There are land pikes as well as water pikes."

"Fancy that! I would never have believed it, had I not seen it with my own eyes!"

They came to the river. "Your net should be set here somewhere," said his wife. "Let us have a look at it."

So they dragged the net out and in it was the hare.

"Mercy me!" cried the wife. "What a queer day this is! To think of finding a hare caught in a fish-net!"

"What are you cackling about? As if you had never seen water hares in your life!" said the husband.

"Indeed I haven't."

By this time they had come to the spot where the treasure was buried. The man dug up the gold, took out as much as each could carry, and they set off home.

The road ran past the landlord's house. As they drew near it, they heard the bleating of a sheep: "Ba-a-aa, ba-a-aa. . . ."

"Oh, what is that, I am frightened to death!" whispered the woman.

"Run quickly, those are devils choking our master. If only they don't see us!"

And they ran home all out of breath.

The man hid the gold and they went to bed.

"Mind you don't tell anyone about this treasure, Tatiana, or we'll have trouble."

"Bless your heart, man, I shan't breathe a word!"

Next day they got up late.

The woman lighted the stove, snatched up her pails and went to fetch water from the well.

At the well her neighbours said:

"Why have you lighted your stove so late to-day, Tatiana?"

"Well may you ask. I was out all night, so I overslept."

"What were you doing out all night?"

"My husband found buried treasure, so we went to bring it home last night."

It was the talk of the village all that day. "Tatiana and her husband have found buried treasure, and they brought home two great bags full of money."

That same evening the news reached the landlord. He sent for the peasant.

"Why did you not tell me you had found treasure?"

"Treasure? I never heard of any treasure," said the man.

"Out with the truth!" shouted the master. "I know everything—your own wife has told everyone about it."

"Ah, but she is not in her right mind. She can tell you things you'd never dream of."

"We shall see about that!"

And the master sent for Tatiana.

"Did your husband find treasure?"

"Yes, sir, he did."

"Did you two go out in the night to fetch it home?"

"Yes, sir, we did."

"Tell me all about it."

"First we went through the woods, and there were pancakes on all the trees."

"Pancakes?"

"Yes, sir. You see, it had been raining pancakes. Then we looked over the hare trap and found a pike in it. So we took the pike out and

went on. Then we came to the river and pulled the net out and found a hare caught in it. So we took the hare out. And hard by the river my husband dug up the treasure. We took a bag of gold each and went back. And we happened to pass your house just as the devils were choking you."

At this the master lost his temper, stamped his foot, and shouted:

"Get out of here, you foolish woman!"

"Well," said her husband, "now you see that she is raving mad. It is a sad life she leads me."

"I can well believe it. You may go home," said the master, waving him off.

The man went home and for aught I know he lives happily and is still enjoying the joke he played on the landlord.

HOW THE POOR MAN DINED WITH HIS LORD

On a bright Sunday morning some peasants sat on the door-step, chatting about their affairs.

The village shopkeeper went up to them and began to boast that he was this, that and the other, and had been in the lord's own chambers.

One of the peasants, the poorest of the lot, sat and scoffed.

"Pooh, that's nothing, I could *dine* with the lord if I wanted to."

"What—you dine with the lord? Never in all your life!" cried the rich shopkeeper.

"But I will, just to prove it."

"No you won't."

They argued on until the poor man said:

"Let us lay a wager. If I dine with the lord, I win your black and your bay; if I do not, I shall work three years for you for nothing."

The shopkeeper was mighty pleased.

"Very well, I bet you my black and my bay with a calf thrown in for good measure. Let these good men stand witness."

And they shook hands on it before the witnesses.

The poor man went to the lord.

"I should like to ask you in secret—what might be the cost of a gold nugget the size of my cap?"

The lord said nothing. He just clapped his hands.

"Ho, there! A drink for this man and myself! Be quick about it. And serve us dinner, too. Sit down, sit down, my man, make yourself at home. Help yourself to all that is on the table!"

The lord treated the poor man as he would an honoured guest, and all the time he was agog with impatience. There was nothing he wanted so much as to lay hands on that gold nugget.

"Now, my man, go quickly and fetch the nugget. I will give you a *pood* of flour and a piece of silver for it."

"But I haven't got any nugget. I was just asking what a nugget the size of my cap would be worth."

The lord flew into a rage.

"Get out, you fool!"

"How can I be a fool when you yourself have treated me as such an honoured guest and the shopkeeper owes me two horses and a calf for this same dinner?"

And the peasant went home happy as a lark.

WANT

In a little village there once lived two peasants, two brothers, one of them poor and the other rich. The rich man moved to town, and he built himself a big house and became a merchant. But the poor brother hadn't a bite of bread at times, and his many children, one smaller than the other, were always crying for something to eat. From morn till night the poor man struggled and strove like a fish bumping its head against ice, but it all came to nothing.

Now, one morning he said to his wife:

"I think I shall go to town and ask my brother, maybe he can help us somehow."

And so he came to the rich man.

"Ah, dear brother," he said, "do help me in my need! I have

no bread for my wife and children and they sit hungry for whole days on end."

"Work this week for me, and then I shall."

Well, what could the poor man do? So he set to work. He chopped fire-wood and brought water, and he groomed the horses and swept the yard.

At the end of the week the rich brother gave him one loaf of bread.

"Here's for your work," he said.

"Thanks, brother, it is better than nothing." The poor man bowed and was just going off, when the rich man called to him:

"Wait a minute, brother! Come and be my guest to-morrow, and bring your wife, too. It will be my birthday, you know."

"Ah, brother, how can I! You know very well yourself—there will be merchants at your birthday, all in fine boots and fur coats, and I go about in bast shoes and a torn old *caftan.*"

"Oh, never mind that! Come along, and we'll find you a place, too," said the rich man.

"All right, dear brother, I shall," replied his brother.

The poor man came home, and he gave his wife the loaf and said to her:

"Do you hear, wife, we're invited to a birthday to-morrow."

"What do you mean? Whose birthday?"

"It's my brother's birthday to-morrow and he's invited us too."

"All right then, let's go."

So the next morning they got up and went to town. They came to the rich man's house, and wished him a happy birthday, and sat down on a bench. There were many rich guests already sitting at the table, and the host served them all handsomely. But the poor man and his wife he never once remembered, and he gave them nothing, so they just had to sit and watch how the others ate and drank.

After a while the dinner ended and the guests began stumbling away from the table, thanking their host and hostess. The poor man stood up, too, and made his brother a humble bow.

The rich guests rode home merry and drunk, with a lot of noise and singing. But the poor man walked back with an empty belly.

"Let's start a song, too," he said to his wife.

"Don't be a fool! People are singing because they've eaten and drunk well. But why should you be wanting to sing?"

"Well, I've been to my brother's birthday, haven't I? It's a shame for me to be going without songs. And besides, if I do sing, people will think I've been treated as well as the rest."

"Well then, you can sing if you like, but I shan't."

So the man began a song, but he thought he heard two voices and he stopped.

"Here, wife," he asked, "was it your squeaky voice joining in?"

"What's the matter with you? I never even thought to."

"Then who was it?"

"How do I know?" said the woman. "Sing again, and I'll listen."

So the man started anew and was sure he sang alone, but still two voices could be heard. Then he stopped again and asked:

"Want, Want, is it you joining in?"

"Yes, Master," replied Want, "it is."

"Then come and keep us company."

"So I shall, Master, and I shan't ever leave you."

Well, by and by the man came home, and Want kept calling him to the pot-house.

"No," said he, "I haven't any money."

"Why, what do we need money for? Look at that sheepskin coat of yours. Surely you don't need it now. Summer is near, and you won't be wearing it, anyhow. Let's go to the pot-house and drink it away."

So the man and Want set off to the pot-house and drank to the health of the old sheepskin.

Next day Want moaned and groaned with the headache it had after the night before. And again it called its master to the pot-house to have a drink.

"No money," said the man.

"Why, what do we need money for?" said Want. "Take your cart and sledge, and they will do for us."

Nothing could be done about it—the poor man could not get the better of Want. So he took the cart and sledge and dragged them off to the pot-house, and he and Want drank them away.

Next morning Want moaned and groaned still more and again called its master to cure their headaches. So the poor man went and drank away his harrow and his wooden plough.

In less than a month he squandered everything he had. Even his hut he pawned to his neighbour and carried off the money to the pot-house.

But still Want wouldn't let him be and kept urging him to go to the pot-house.

"No, Want, say what you will, there's nothing more to drink for."

"Why nothing? Hasn't your wife got two *sarafans*? You can leave her one of them, but the other we must take and drink away."

So the man took a *sarafan* and drank it away, and then he thought:

"Well, now I'm clean, not a stitch left on me or my wife, not a stick nor a stone in the whole world."

But up got Want in the morning and saw there was nothing more to be had from the man.

"Master," it wheezed.

"What is it, Want?"

"Here's what: go along to your neighbour and ask him for his cart and oxen."

So the man went to his neighbour and asked:

"Lend me your cart and a pair of oxen for a while. I shall work a whole week for you if you do."

"What do you need them for?" asked his neighbour.

"To fetch some fire-wood from the forest."

"All right then, take them, but mind you don't overload."

"Oh no, God bless you!"

And so the man led the oxen to his hut, and he and Want got on to the cart and rode out into the open field.

"Master," asked Want, "do you know the big stone in the middle of this field?"

"Yes, I do."

"All right then, drive straight up to it."

Well, they came to the place and stopped, and they got out of the cart, and Want bade the man raise the stone. The man heaved, and Want helped, and at last they lifted it. And what should they see beneath the stone but a pit full of gold!

"Don't stand staring like that," said Want, "be quick and load it on the cart."

The man set to work and loaded the cart with the gold, and not a coin did he leave in the pit. When he saw the pit empty he said to Want:

"Have another look, Want, I've a mind there's some more money left there."

And Want stooped over:

"Where? I can't see anything."

"Why, there it is, shining in the corner."

"No, I don't see it."

"Get down into the pit and you'll see it very well."

Want clambered down into the pit, and as soon as it did so the man shut it up with the stone.

"That'll be better," said the man, "or else, if I'd taken you with me, not so soon, maybe, but you'd waste all that money on drink as well, you old beggar Want!"

Then he went back home, dumped the money into his cellar, gave back his neighbour's cart and oxen and began thinking how to set himself up. He bought some logs and built a fine house and began to live in it twice as well as his brother.

By and by the man set off to town to invite the rich brother and his wife to his birthday.

"What are you telling me?" said the rich man to his brother. "How can you have a birthday with nothing to eat?"

"There used to be nothing, but now there is, thank God, and no less than you have. Come and see for yourself."

"All right, so I shall."

The next day the rich man and his wife up and went to their brother's birthday. And what should they see but the fine new house of that naked beggar, their brother. Not every merchant could boast one like it. The peasant served them handsomely with all sorts of dainties and all kinds of wine and mead.

And then the rich man asked his brother:

"Listen, my man, how did you come to such wealth?"

And the man told him the whole truth: how he had been pestered by the old beggar Want and for grief had drunk away all his belongings at the pot-house, till only body and soul were left, how Want had shown him the treasure, and how he had taken it and got rid of old Want.

And the rich man groaned with envy. "What," thought he, "if I go to the open fields and lift the stone to free old Want? Let it ruin my brother to the last shred, that he may never dare boast to me of his riches."

So he sent his wife home and drove out into the open fields. Up to the stone he came and dragged it aside and let out Want.

"Off you go to my brother," said the man, "and ruin him to the last shred."

"No, good man," replied Want, "I shan't go to him any more. I'd rather stay with you. You are a kind man, you let me out, and that nasty fellow, he shut me up in the ground."

In a short while the envious brother was ruined. And instead of the rich man he used to be, he became a naked beggar.

FATHER FROST

Once upon a time there lived an old man with his second wife, and they each had a daughter. He had a daughter and so had she.

Everyone knows what stepmothers are like.

If you do wrong, you are beaten, and if you do right, you are beaten. Not so with the stepmother's own daughter: she is petted and praised for a good lass no matter what she does.

The old man's daughter rose before daybreak to look after the cattle, bring fire-wood and water into the house, light the stove and sweep the floor. But her stepmother found fault with everything and fussed and scolded her all day long.

A wind howls loud and then it drops. But there is no quieting an old dame once she is roused. The stepmother made up her mind to get rid of her stepdaughter.

"Take her away, old one," she said to her husband, "I can't bear the sight of her. Take her to the forest into the biting frost and leave her there."

The old man wept and sorrowed but he knew he could do nothing: his wife always had the last word. So he harnessed his horse and called to his daughter:

"Come, my sweet child, get into the sledge."

Then he took the homeless girl to the forest, dumped her into a snowdrift beneath a large fir-tree and drove away.

It was very cold, and the girl sat under the fir-tree and shivered. Suddenly she heard Father Frost near by leaping from tree to tree and crackling and snapping among the twigs. In a twinkling he was on the top of the very tree beneath which she sat.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called.

"Yes, I'm very warm, Father Frost!" she answered politely.

Then Father Frost came down lower and he crackled and snapped louder than ever.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called again. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

The girl was scarcely able to fetch her breath, but she said:

"Yes, I'm very warm, Father Frost!"

And Father Frost came down still lower, crackling and snapping very loud indeed.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he asked. "Are you warm, my pretty one? Are you warm, my sweet one?"

The girl was growing numb and could hardly move her tongue, but still she said:

"I'm very warm, good Father Frost!"

Then Father Frost took pity on the girl and he wrapt her up in his fluffy furs and downy quilts.

Meanwhile, the old woman was preparing for the funeral feast and she was baking pancakes in memory of her stepdaughter. Said she to her husband:

"Go to the forest, you old croaker, and bring back your daughter to be buried!"

The old man went to the forest and there, at the very spot where he had left her, sat his daughter very gay and rosy. She was wrapt in a sable coat and clad in silver and gold. Beside her stood a large coffer full of costly presents.

The old man was overjoyed. He seated his daughter in the sledge, put the coffer in beside her and drove home.

Now, the old woman was still baking the pancakes when suddenly she heard her little dog under the table saying:

"Bow-wow! The old man's daughter comes a rich
bride and fair,
But the old woman's daughter, she will marry ne'er!"

The old woman threw a pancake to the dog and said:
"You speak wrong, dog! You must say:

" 'The old woman's daughter will be wooed and won,
But the old man's daughter is dead and gone!' "

The dog ate the pancake, but still it said:

"Bow-wow! The old man's daughter comes a rich
bride and fair,
But the old woman's daughter, she will marry ne'er!"

The old woman threw more pancakes to the dog and she beat it, but still the dog said just what it had before.

All of a sudden the gate creaked, the door opened and in walked the old man's daughter, dazzling in her attire of silver and gold. Behind her came her father carrying a large and heavy coffer full of costly gifts. The old woman looked and dropped her hands in dismay.

"Harness the horse, you old croaker!" said she to her husband. "Take my daughter to the forest and leave her in the same place as yours."

The old man put the old woman's daughter in the sledge, took her to the forest to the same place, dumped her into the snowdrift underneath the tall fir-tree and drove away.

There sat the old woman's daughter and it was so cold her teeth chattered.

By and by Father Frost came leaping from tree to tree, crackling and snapping among the twigs and stopping now and then to glance at the old woman's daughter.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called.

Said she in reply:

"Oh, no, I'm terribly cold! Don't scrunch and crackle so, Frost!"

Then Father Frost came down lower, and he crackled and snapped the louder.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

"Oh, no," said she, "I'm numb all over! Go away, Frost!"

But Father Frost came down still lower and he crackled and snapped ever louder and his breath grew colder and colder.

"Are you warm, my lass?" he called again. "Are you warm, my pretty one?"

"Oh, no!" she called back. "I'm frozen! A plague on you, you old Frost!"

But Father Frost was so angered by these words that he gripped her with all his might and froze the old woman's daughter to death.

Day had barely dawned when the old woman said to her husband:

"Make haste and harness the horse, you old croaker. Go fetch my daughter and bring her back clad in silver and gold."

The old man drove away and the little dog under the table said:

"Bow-wow! The old man's daughter will soon be wed,
But the old woman's daughter is cold and dead!"

The old woman threw the dog a cake and said:
"You speak wrong, dog! You must say:

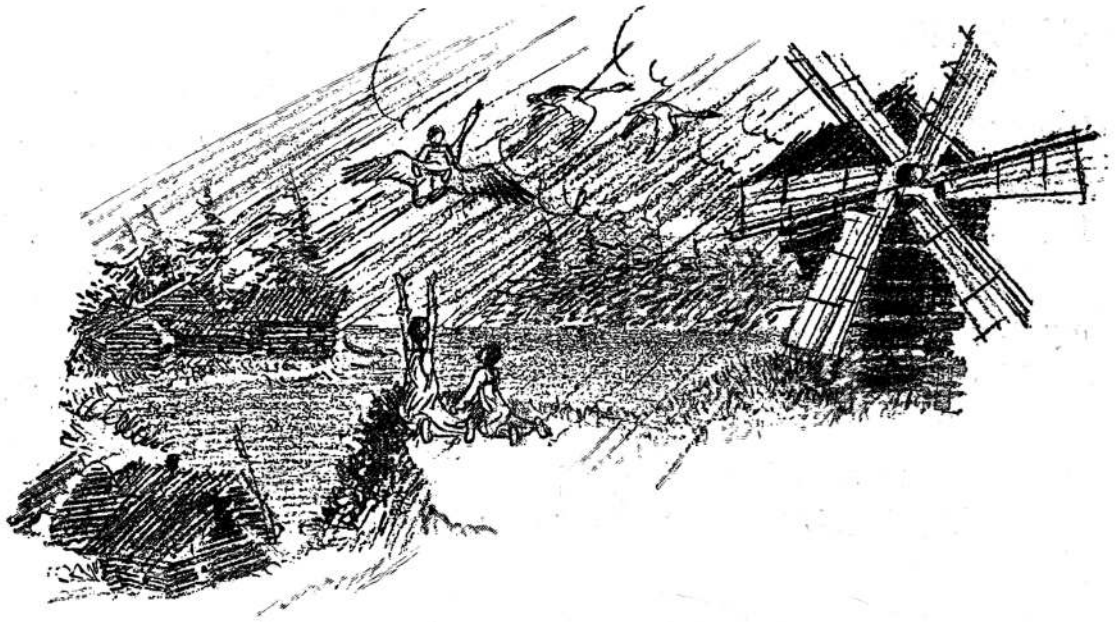
" 'The old woman's daughter comes a rich bride and fair,
But the old man's daughter, she will marry ne'er!' "

But the dog said just what it had before:

"Bow-wow! The old woman's daughter is cold and dead!"

Just then the gate creaked and the old woman rushed out to meet her daughter. She turned back the bast cover and there lay her daughter in the sledge, dead.

The old woman broke out into loud weeping, but it was all too late.



LITTLE GIRL AND THE SWAN-GEESE

Once there was a peasant and his wife and they had a little girl and a little boy.

"Daughter," said the mother to her Little Girl, "we are going out to work, so look after your Little Brother. If you are a good girl and do not go out of doors, we shall buy you a new kerchief."

Father and Mother went away, but Little Girl forgot what she had been told. She seated Little Brother on the grass by the window and ran away to play with her friends.

Suddenly a flock of Swan-Geese swooped down, caught up Little Brother and carried him off on their wings.

Little Girl came home, but alas!—Little Brother was gone. She gasped, ran here and there—but not a sign of him was to be found.

She called him and sobbed, crying that she would catch it from Father and Mother, but Little Brother did not answer.

So out she ran into the open field but could see nothing save some Swan-Geese flying far beyond the dark woods. Suddenly she was sure it was they who had carried her brother off: folks said the Swan-Geese were wicked birds who stole little children.

So off ran Little Girl after the birds. She ran and ran till she came to an Oven.

"Oven, Oven, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Eat one of my rye loaves and I will tell you," said the Oven.

"What, me eat a rye loaf? At Father's we do not eat even wheaten loaves!"

So the Oven did not tell her. Little Girl ran on a bit farther and saw an Apple-Tree.

"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Eat one of my wild apples and I will tell you," said the Tree.

"At Father's we do not eat even garden apples!"

So the Apple-Tree did not tell her. Little Girl ran on till she came to Milk River with Fruit-Jelly Banks.

"Milk River with Fruit-Jelly Banks, tell me where the Swan-Geese have flown?"

"Have some of my jelly with milk and I will tell you."

"At Father's we do not eat even jelly with cream."

So Milk River did not tell her.

All day long she ran about the fields and woods. When evening came there was nothing for her to do but go home. All at once, what should she see but a hut on hen's feet with one tiny window, turning round and round.

Inside the hut sat Baba-Yaga, the witch, spinning tow. And on the bench sat the Girl's Little Brother playing with silver apples.

Little Girl went in.

"Good evening, Granny!"

"Good evening, lass. What brings you here?"

"My frock is wet through with dew, so I have come in to dry."

"Sit down then and spin some tow."

Baba-Yaga gave her the spindle and went out. Little Girl was sitting there spinning when all of a sudden a Mouse ran out from under the stove and said to her:

"Lassie, lassie, give me some porridge and I will tell you something."

Little Girl gave it some porridge, and Mouse said:

"Baba-Yaga has gone to make a fire in the bath-house. She will steam you and wash you, roast you in the oven and eat you up, and then take a ride on your bones."

Little Girl began crying and trembling with fear, but Mouse went on:

"Make haste, take Little Brother and run away, and I will spin the tow for you."

So Little Girl took Little Brother in her arms and ran off. Baba-Yaga came up to the window every once in a while and said:

"Are you spinning, lass?"

And Mouse would answer: "Yes, I am, Granny."

Baba-Yaga made a fire in the bath-house and came for Little Girl. But the hut was empty. Baba-Yaga cried: "Fly away, Swan-Geese, fly and catch them! Little Girl has carried off Little Brother!"

Little Girl ran until she came to Milk River, and what should she see there but the Swan-Geese coming after her and her brother.

"Milk River, Milk River, hide me, do!" cried Little Girl.

"Eat some of my plain fruit jelly."

Little Girl ate some and said thank you. So Milk River hid her and her brother in the shadow of its Fruit-Jelly Banks.

And the Swan-Geese flew past without seeing them.

Little Girl ran on again. But the Swan-Geese turned back and flew straight towards her. At any moment they would see her. What was she to do? She ran up to the Apple-Tree.

"Apple-Tree, Apple-Tree, hide me, do!"

"Eat my wild apples."

Little Girl ate one quickly and said thank you. The Apple-Tree hid her among its leaves and branches.

The Swan-Geese flew past without seeing her.

Little Girl picked up her brother and ran on again. When she had almost reached home the Swan-Geese caught sight of her. They honked and flapped their wings, and in another minute would have torn Little Brother out of her arms.

Little Girl came running up to the Oven.

"Oven, Oven, hide me, do!"

"Eat one of my rye loaves."

Little Girl popped a piece of a loaf into her mouth and crawled into the Oven with her brother.

The Swan-Geese flew round and round screaming and honking, but after a while they gave up the chase and flew back to Baba-Yaga.

Little Girl said thank you to the Oven and ran home with her brother.

And before long Father and Mother came home.

WEE LITTLE HAVROSHECHKA

There are good people in the world and some who are not so good. There are also people who are shameless in their wickedness.

Wee Little Havroshechka had the bad luck to fall in with such as these. She was an orphan and these people took her in and brought her up only to make her work till she couldn't stand. She wove and spun and did the housework and had to answer for everything.

Now, the mistress of the house had three daughters. The eldest was called One-Eye, the second Two-Eyes, and the youngest Three-Eyes.

The three sisters did nothing all day but sit by the gate and watch what went on in the street, while Wee Little Havroshechka sewed, spun and wove for them and never heard a kind word in return.

Sometimes Wee Little Havroshechka would go out into the field, put her arms round the neck of her brindled cow and pour out all her sorrows to her.

"Brindled, my dear," she would say. "They beat me and scold me, they don't give me enough to eat, and yet they forbid me to cry. I am to have five *poods* of flax spun, woven, bleached and rolled by to-morrow."

And the cow would say in reply:

"My bonny lass, you have only to climb into one of my ears and come out through the other, and your work will be done for you."

And just as Brindled said, so it was. Wee Little Havroshechka would climb into one of the cow's ears and come out through the other. And, lo and behold! there lay the cloth, all woven and bleached and rolled.

Little Havroshechka would then take the rolls of cloth to her mistress who would look at them and grunt and put them away in a chest and give Wee Little Havroshechka even more work to do.

And Wee Little Havroshechka would go to Brindled, put her arms round her and stroke her, climb into one of her ears and come out through the other, pick up the ready cloth and take it to her mistress again.

One day the old woman called her daughter One-Eye to her and said:

"My good child, my bonny child, go and see who helps the orphan with her work. Find out who spins the thread, weaves the cloth and rolls it."

One-Eye went with Wee Little Havroshechka into the woods and she went with her into the fields, but she forgot her mother's command and she basked in the sun and lay down on the grass. And Havroshechka murmured:

"Sleep, little eye, sleep!"

One-Eye shut her eye and she fell asleep. While she slept, Brindled wove, bleached and rolled the cloth.

The mistress learnt nothing, so she sent for her second daughter Two-Eyes.

"My good child, my bonny child, go and see who helps the orphan with her work."

Two-Eyes went with Wee Little Havroshechka, but she forgot her mother's command and she basked in the sun and lay down on the grass. And Wee Little Havroshechka murmured:

"Sleep, little eye! Sleep, the other little eye!"

Two-Eyes shut her eyes and she dozed off. While she slept, Brindled wove, bleached and rolled the cloth.

The old woman was very angry and on the third day she told her third daughter Three-Eyes to go with Wee Little Havroshechka to whom she gave more work to do than ever.

Three-Eyes played and skipped about in the sun until she was so tired that she lay down on the grass. And Wee Little Havroshechka sang out:

"Sleep, little eye! Sleep, the other little eye!"

But she forgot all about the third little eye.

Two of Three-Eyes' eyes fell asleep, but the third looked on and saw everything. It saw Wee Little Havroshechka climb into one of the cow's ears and come out through the other and pick up the ready cloth.

Three-Eyes came home and she told her mother what she had seen. The old woman was overjoyed, and on the very next day she went to her husband and said:

"Go and kill the brindled cow."

The old man was astonished and tried to reason with her.

"Have you lost your wits, old woman?" he said. "The cow is a good one and still young."

"Kill it and say no more," the wife insisted.

There was no help for it and the old man began to sharpen his knife. Wee Little Havroshechka found it all out and she ran to the field and threw her arms round Brindled.

"Brindled, dearie," she said, "they want to kill you!"

And the cow replied:

"Do not grieve, my bonny lass, and do what I tell you. Take my bones, tie them up in a kerchief, bury them in the garden and water them every day. Do not eat of my flesh and never forget me."

The old man killed the cow, and Wee Little Havroshechka did as Brindled had told her to. She went hungry, but she would not touch the meat, and she buried the bones in the garden and watered them every day.

After a while an apple-tree grew up out of them, and a wonderful tree it was! Its apples were round and juicy, its swaying boughs were of silver and its rustling leaves were of gold. Whoever drove by would stop to look, and whoever came near marvelled.

A long time passed by and a little time. One day One-Eye, Two-Eyes and Three-Eyes were out walking in the garden. And who should chance to be riding by at the time but a young man, handsome and strong and rich and curly-haired. When he saw the juicy apples he stopped and said to the girls teasingly:

"Fair maidens! Her will I marry amongst you three who brings me an apple off yonder tree."

And off rushed the sisters to the apple-tree, each trying to get ahead of the others.

But the apples which had been hanging very low and seemed within easy reach, now swung up high in the air above the sisters' heads.

The sisters tried to knock them down, but the leaves came down in a shower and blinded them. They tried to pluck the apples off,

but the boughs caught in their braids and unplaited them. Struggle and stretch as they would, they could not reach the apples and only scratched their hands.

Then Wee Little Havroshechka walked up to the tree, and at once the boughs bent down and the apples came into her hands. She gave an apple to the handsome young stranger and he married her. From that day on she knew no sorrow, and she and her husband lived happily ever after.

SISTER ALYONUSHKA AND BROTHER IVANUSHKA

Once there lived an old man and his wife, and they had a girl named Alyonushka and a little boy named Ivanushka.

The old man and the old woman died, and Alyonushka and Ivanushka were left all alone in the world.

Alyonushka set off to work and took her little brother with her. They had a long way to go, and as they were crossing a field, Ivanushka felt thirsty.

"Sister Alyonushka, I am thirsty," he said.

"Be patient, little brother, we shall soon come to a well."

They walked and walked, the sun was now high in the sky and the air hot and dry. They came upon a cow's hoof filled with water.

"Sister Alyonushka, may I drink out of the hoof?"

"No, little brother, you will turn into a calf."

Little Ivanushka obeyed and they walked on a bit farther.

The sun was still high in the sky and the air hot and dry. They came upon a horse's hoof filled with water.

"Sister Alyonushka, may I drink out of the hoof?"

"No, little brother, you will turn into a foal."

Ivanushka sighed and they walked on.

They walked and walked, but the sun was still high in the sky and the air hot and dry. They came upon a goat's hoof filled with water.

"Sister Alyonushka, I am dying of thirst. May I drink out of the hoof?" asked Ivanushka.

"No, little brother, you will turn into a kid."

But Ivanushka did not heed his sister and drank out of the goat's hoof.

The moment he did so he turned into a kid.

Alyonushka called her brother, and up came running a little white goat instead of Ivanushka.

Alyonushka burst into tears. She sat sobbing on the ground while the Kid skipped round.

Just then a Merchant chanced to ride by.

"What are you crying for, pretty maid?" he said.

Alyonushka told him about her trouble.

The Merchant said: "Marry me, pretty maid. I will dress you in gold and silver, and the Kid will live with us."

Alyonushka thought it over and agreed to marry the Merchant.

They lived together happily, and the Kid lived with them and ate and drank with Alyonushka out of the same cup.

One day the Merchant went away from home. And suddenly a Witch appeared out of nowhere. She stood under Alyonushka's window and coaxed her to go and bathe in the river.

Alyonushka followed the Witch to the river, and when they got there the Witch fell upon her, tied a stone round her neck and threw her into the water.

Then the Witch turned herself into Alyonushka, put on her clothes and went to her house. No one guessed she was a Witch. The Merchant came home, and even he did not guess.

Only the Kid knew what had happened. He went about with drooping head and did not touch food or drink. Morning and evening he walked at the water's edge, calling:

"Sister, dear sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me."

The Witch got to know of this and began to urge her husband to kill the little goat.

The Merchant was sorry for the Kid, he had become very fond of him. But the Witch kept at the Merchant so long, coaxing and wheedling, that he gave in at last.

"All right, kill him," he said.

The Witch had big fires kindled, big pots heated and big knives sharpened.

The Kid found out that he was going to be killed, so he said to his foster-father:

"Let me go to the river before I die and have a last little drink."

"Go," said the Merchant.

The Kid ran down to the river, stood on the bank and cried piteously:

"Sister, dear sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me.
Fires are burning high,
Pots are boiling,
Knives are ringing,
And I am going to die."

And Alyonushka answered from out the river:

"Brother, dear brother Ivanushka!
A heavy stone lies on my shoulders,
Silky grasses entangle my legs,
Yellow sands press hard on my breast."

The Witch set out in search of the Kid, but she could not find him, so she called a servant and said:

"Go and find the Kid and bring him to me."

The servant went to the river, and there he saw the little goat running along the bank, crying piteously:

"Sister, dear sister Alyonushka!
Swim out, swim out to me.
Fires are burning high,
Pots are boiling,
Knives are ringing,
And I am going to die."

And from the river a voice came back:

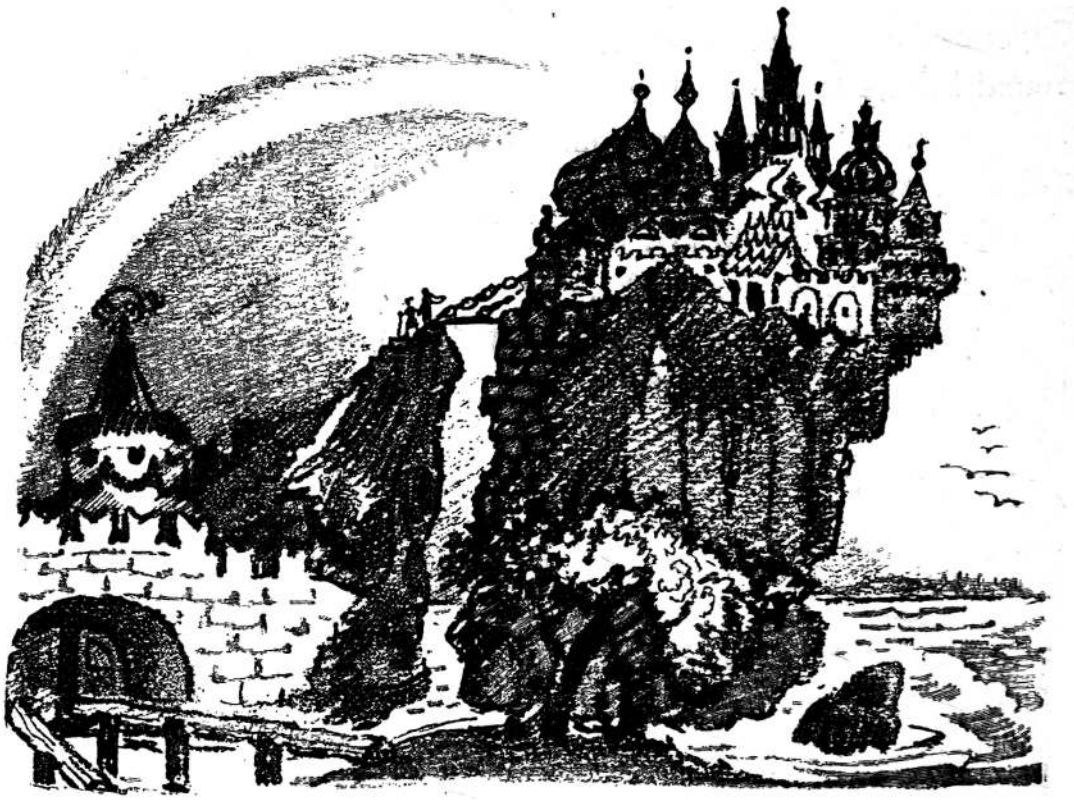
"Brother, dear brother Ivanushka!
A heavy stone lies on my shoulders,
Silky grasses entangle my legs,
Yellow sands press hard on my breast."

The servant ran home and told his master what he had heard and seen down by the river. The Merchant called some people together, they went down to the river, cast a silken net and dragged

Alyonushka out and on to the bank. They untied the stone which was round her neck, dipped her in spring water and dressed her in handsome clothes. Alyonushka came back to life and was more beautiful than ever.

The Kid, wild with joy, jumped three somersaults and turned back into the little boy Ivanushka.

And the wicked Witch was tied to a horse's tail and the horse turned loose in an open field.



THE FROG PRINCESS

In days gone by there was a Tsar who had three sons. When his sons came of age the Tsar called them to him and said: "My dear lads, I want you to get married, so that I may see your little ones, my grandchildren, before I die."

And his sons replied: "Very well, Father, give us your blessing. Who do you want us to marry?"

"Each of you must take an arrow, go out into the green field and shoot it. Where the arrows fall, there your destiny shall be."

So the sons bowed to their father, each of them took an arrow and went out into the green field, where they drew their bows and let fly their arrows.

The arrow of the eldest son fell in the courtyard of a nobleman, and the nobleman's daughter picked it up. The arrow of the middle son fell in the yard of a merchant, and the merchant's daughter picked it up.

But the arrow of the youngest son, Prince Ivan, flew up and away he knew not where. He walked on and on in search of it, and at last he came to a marsh, where what should he see but a Frog sitting on a leaf with the arrow in its mouth. Prince Ivan said to it:

"Frog, Frog, give me back my arrow."

And the Frog replied:

"Marry me!"

"How can I marry a Frog?"

"Marry me, for it is your destiny."

Prince Ivan was sadly disappointed, but what could he do? He picked up the Frog and brought it home. The Tsar celebrated three weddings: his eldest son was married to the nobleman's daughter, his middle son to the merchant's daughter, and poor Prince Ivan to the Frog.

One day the Tsar called his sons and said:

"I want to see which of your wives is most skilled with her needle. Let them each sew me a shirt by to-morrow morning."

The sons bowed to their father and went out.

Prince Ivan went home and sat down in a corner, looking very sad. The Frog hopped about on the floor and said to him:

"Why are you so sad, Prince Ivan? Are you in trouble?"

"My father wants you to sew him a shirt by to-morrow morning."

Said the Frog:

"Don't be downhearted, Prince Ivan. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

So Prince Ivan went to bed, and the Frog hopped out on to the door-step, cast off her frog skin, and turned into Vasilisa the Wise, a maiden fair beyond compare.

She clapped her hands and cried:

"Maids and nurses, get ready, work steady! By to-morrow morning sew me a shirt like the one my own father used to wear!"

When Prince Ivan woke up next morning, the Frog was hopping about on the floor again, and on the table, wrapped up in a linen towel, the shirt lay. Prince Ivan was delighted. He picked up the shirt and took it to his father. He found the Tsar receiving gifts from his other sons. When the eldest laid out his shirt, the Tsar said:

"This shirt will do for one of my servants."

When the middle son laid out his shirt, the Tsar said:

"This one is only good for the bath-house."

Prince Ivan laid out his shirt, handsomely embroidered in gold and silver. The Tsar took one look at it and said:

"Now that is a shirt indeed! I shall wear it for best."

The two elder brothers went home and said to each other:

"It looks as though we had laughed at Prince Ivan's wife for nothing—it seems she is not a frog, but a sorceress."

Again the Tsar called his sons.

"Let your wives bake me bread by to-morrow morning," he said. "I want to know which one cooks the best."

Prince Ivan came home looking very sad again. The Frog said to him:

"Why are you so sad, Prince?"

"The Tsar wants you to bake bread for him by to-morrow morning," replied her husband.

"Don't be downhearted, Prince Ivan. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

Now those other daughters-in-law had made fun of the Frog at first, but this time they sent an old henwife to see how the Frog baked her bread.

But the Frog was cunning and guessed what they were at. She kneaded the dough, broke the top of the stove and emptied the dough-trough straight down the hole. The old henwife ran back to the Tsar's daughters-in-law and told them all she had seen, and they did as the Frog had done.

Then the Frog hopped out on to the door-step, turned into Vasilisa the Wise, clapped her hands and cried:

"Maids and nurses, get ready, work steady! By to-morrow morning bake me a soft white loaf like the ones I ate when I lived home."

Prince Ivan woke up in the morning, and there on the table he saw a loaf of bread with all kinds of pretty designs on it. On the sides were quaint figures, on the top—royal cities with walls and gates.

Prince Ivan was ever so pleased. He wrapped the loaf up in a linen towel and took it to his father. Just then the Tsar was receiving loaves from his elder sons. Their wives had dropped the dough into the fire as the old henwife had told them, and it came out just a lump of charred dough. The Tsar took the loaf from his eldest son, looked at it, and sent it to the servants' hall. He took the loaf from his middle son and did the same with that. But when Prince Ivan handed him his loaf the Tsar said:

"Now that is what I call bread! It is fit to be eaten only on holidays."

And the Tsar bade his three sons come to his feast the next day and bring their wives with them.

Prince Ivan came home grieving again. The Frog hopped up and said:

"Croak, croak, why are you so sad, Prince Ivan? Has your father said anything unkind to you?"

"Froggy, my Frog, how can I help being sad? Father wants me to bring you to his feast, but how can you appear before people as my wife?"

"Don't be downhearted, Prince Ivan," said the Frog. "Go to the feast alone and I will come later. When you hear a knocking and a banging, do not be afraid. If you are asked, say it is only your Froggy riding in her box."

So Prince Ivan went by himself. His elder brothers drove up with their wives, rouged and powdered and dressed in fine clothes. They stood there and mocked at Prince Ivan.

"Why did you not bring your wife? You could have brought her in a handkerchief. Where, indeed, did you find such a beauty? You must have searched all the marshes for her."

The Tsar and his sons and daughters-in-law and all the guests sat down to feast at the oaken tables covered with handsome cloths. All at once there was a knocking and a banging that made the whole palace shake. The guests jumped up in fright, but Prince Ivan said:

"Do not be afraid, good folks, it is only my Froggy riding in her box."

A gilded carriage drawn by six white horses dashed up to the palace door and out of it stepped Vasilisa the Wise in a dress of sky-blue silk strewn with stars and with a shining moon upon her head—a maiden as fair as the sky at dawn, the fairest maiden ever born. She took Prince Ivan by the hand and led him to the oaken tables with the handsome cloths on them.

The guests began to eat, drink and make merry. Vasilisa the Wise drank from her glass and emptied the dregs into her left sleeve. Then she ate some swan meat and put the bones in her right sleeve.

The wives of the elder princes saw her do this and they did the same.

When the eating and drinking was over the time came for dancing. Vasilisa the Wise took Prince Ivan and tripped off with him. She whirled and danced, and everybody watched and marvelled. She waved her left sleeve, and lo!—a lake appeared. She waved her right sleeve, and white swans began to swim upon the lake. The Tsar and the guests were struck with wonder.

Then the other daughters-in-law went to dance. They waved one sleeve, but only splashed wine over the guests; they waved the other, but only scattered bones, and one bone hit the Tsar right in the eye. The Tsar flew into a rage and drove both daughters-in-law away.

Meanwhile, Prince Ivan slipped out and ran home. There he found the frog skin and threw it into the fire.

When Vasilisa the Wise came home, she looked for the frog skin but could not find it. She sat down on a bench sorely grieved and said to Prince Ivan:

"Ah, Prince Ivan, what have you done! Had you but waited three more days I would have been yours for ever. But now farewell. Seek me beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands, in the Thrice-Ten Kingdom, where Koshchei-the-Deathless dwells. . . ."

So saying, Vasilisa the Wise turned herself into a grey cuckoo and flew out of the window. Prince Ivan wept long and hard, then bowed in all four directions and went forth he knew not where to seek his wife, Vasilisa the Wise. How long he walked it is hard to say, but his boots wore down at the heels, his *caftan* wore out at the elbows, and his cap became battered by the rain. By and by he met a little man, as old as old can be.

"Good day, my lad," said Little Old Man. "Where are you going, what is your errand?"

Prince Ivan told him about his trouble.

"Ah, why did you burn the frog skin, Prince Ivan?" said Little Old Man. "It was not yours to keep or do away with. Vasilisa the Wise was born wiser than her father, and that made him so angry that he turned her into a frog for three years. Ah, well, it cannot be helped now. Take this ball of yarn and follow it without fear wherever it rolls."

Prince Ivan thanked Little Old Man and followed the ball of yarn. It rolled on and he came after. In an open field he met a Bear. Prince Ivan took aim and was about to kill it, but the Bear up and spoke in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Prince Ivan, you may have need of me some day."

Prince Ivan spared the Bear's life and went on farther. Suddenly he saw a Drake flying overhead. He took aim, but the Drake said in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Prince Ivan, you may have need of me some day."

He spared the Drake and went farther. A Hare came running by. Again Prince Ivan snatched his bow to shoot it, but the Hare said in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Prince Ivan, you may have need of me some day."

So he spared the Hare and went on. He came to the blue sea and saw a Pike lying on the sandy beach gasping for breath.

"Ah, Prince Ivan," said the Pike, "take pity on me and throw me back into the blue sea!"

So he threw the Pike into the sea and walked on along the shore. By and by the ball of yarn rolled up to a forest, and there stood a little hut on hen's feet, turning round and round.

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please."

The hut turned its face to him and its back to the trees. Prince Ivan walked in, and there, sitting in the chimney corner, was Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag. When she saw him she said: "Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"You bad old baggage," retorted Prince Ivan. "You might give me meat and drink and steam me in the bath before asking questions."

So Baba-Yaga steamed him in the bath, gave him meat and drink and put him to bed, and then Prince Ivan told her he was seeking his wife, Vasilisa the Wise.

"I know, I know," said Baba-Yaga, "your wife is now in the power of Koshchei-the-Deathless. It will be hard to get her back. Koshchei is more than a match for you. His death is at the point of a needle, the needle is in an egg, the egg in a duck, the duck in a hare, the hare in a stone casket, the casket at the top of a tall oak-tree that Koshchei-the-Deathless guards as the apple of his eye."

Prince Ivan spent the night at Baba-Yaga's, and in the morning she showed him the way to the tall oak. How long he walked it is hard to say, but by and by he came to the tall oak-tree with the stone casket at the top of it. But it was hard to reach.

Suddenly up came the Bear and pulled the tree out, roots and all. Down fell the casket and broke open. Out of the casket sprang a hare and scampered off as fast as it could. The other Hare gave chase, caught it and tore it to bits. Out of the hare flew a duck and shot high into the sky. And in a twinkling the Drake was at it and fetched it a blow. The duck dropped the egg, and down it fell into the blue sea.

At this Prince Ivan wept bitter tears. How could he find the egg in the sea? But all at once the Pike swam up with the egg in its mouth.

Prince Ivan broke the egg, took the needle out and set about breaking the point off. The more he bent it, the more Koshchei-the-Deathless writhed and screamed, but all in vain. Prince Ivan broke off the point of the needle and Koshchei fell down dead.

Prince Ivan went to Koshchei's white stone palace. Vasilisa the Wise came running out to meet him and kissed him on his honey mouth. And Prince Ivan and Vasilisa the Wise went back to their own home and lived in peace and happiness to a ripe old age.

VASILISA THE WISE

A Peasant sowed rye and the crop he reaped was so abundant he could hardly gather it in. He carted the sheaves home, threshed them, and filled his barn chock-full of grain. With his corn-bins full, he said to himself:

"I shall live without a care in the world."

Now a Mouse and a Sparrow took to visiting the Peasant's barn. They would drop in at least five times a day, have a good feed and be gone—the Mouse back to his mouse-hole, the Sparrow back to his nest. For all of three years they were the best of friends and mess-mates. By the end of that time they had eaten up almost all the grain—

only the least little bit was left. Seeing this, the Mouse decided to steal a march on the Sparrow and take what was left for himself. One dark night he gnawed a hole in the floor and ran off what was left of the corn into the cellar.

In the morning the Sparrow came flying into the barn for his breakfast, but, alas, there was not a single grain left. The poor fellow flew out hungry and thought to himself:

"That wretched Mouse has tricked me. What if I fly to the Lion, their King, and tell him all about it? He will see justice done, I am sure."

So off he flew to the Lion.

"Lion, King of the Beasts," said the Sparrow humbly, "I have lived with one of your subjects, the sharp-toothed Mouse, for all of three years. We ate out of the same bin and never did we quarrel. But when the stock began to give out the Mouse played a shabby trick on me. He gnawed a hole in the barn floor, ran the corn off into the cellar, and left me to starve. Please judge us in all fairness. If you do not, I shall go to my own King, the Eagle, to have my wrongs righted."

"Go, and good riddance," said the Lion.

So off went the Sparrow to the Eagle. He told him all his wrongs —how the Mouse had cheated him and how the Lion had winked at his doings.

That made King Eagle very angry, and he forthwith dispatched a messenger to the Lion, saying:

"Come to-morrow to such and such a field with all your beasts, and I shall muster all my birds and give you battle."

So King Lion had to sound the war-cry and rally all his beasts for the battle. They came in great numbers, and the minute they entered the open field the Eagle and all his feathered host swooped down on them like a cloud. And there began a terrific battle. They

fought for three hours and three minutes. King Eagle won the fight and left the field piled high with the bodies of the enemy. Then he sent his birds home and he himself flew off to a dense forest. Faint from his wound and loss of blood, he came to rest in a great oak-tree, where he sat wondering how to regain his lost strength.

All this happened years and years ago. At that time there lived a Merchant and his wife all alone, without a child to cheer them. One morning the Merchant said to his wife:

"I had a bad dream. I dreamt that a great bird came to live with us. It devoured a whole ox and drank a full tub at one go, but we could not get rid of it and had to feed it. I think I will go for a stroll in the woods, perhaps that will cheer me up a bit."

So he took his gun and went into the woods. How long he wandered there it is hard to say, but at last he came to the oak-tree in which the Eagle was resting. Seeing the bird, he raised his gun and was about to fire.

"Do not shoot me, good man," said the Eagle in a human voice. "Killing me will do you no good, but if you take me home and feed me for three years, three months and three days, I will recover my strength and reward you handsomely."

"What reward can an eagle offer?" thought the Merchant, and he raised his gun again.

And again the Eagle pleaded for his life. The Merchant raised his gun a third time, and for the third time the Eagle said:

"Do not shoot me, good man. Feed me for three years, three months and three days. When I get well, I shall reward you handsomely."

So the Merchant spared the Eagle's life. He took him up and carried him home. There and then he killed an ox and filled a tub to the brim with a honey drink. This food should last the Eagle a long time, he thought, but the Eagle ate and drank everything up at one

go. He was eating the poor Merchant out of house and home. Seeing this, the Eagle said to him.

"Go into the open field, my good man, and there you will find many beasts slain and wounded. Skin them and take their costly furs to town and sell them. The money will keep you and me in food and drink, with some left over."

The Merchant went to the open field and there he saw many beasts lying about killed and wounded. He skinned them and took the costly furs to town and got a lot of money for them.

A year passed. One day the Eagle told his host to take him to the place where the tall oaks grew. The Merchant put his horse to a cart and brought the Eagle to that place. The Eagle flew high above the clouds and struck one of the trees with his breast in full flight. The oak split in two.

"No, Merchant," said the Eagle, "I have not got back my old strength yet. Feed me for another full year."

And so a second year passed. Again the Eagle flew high above the dark clouds, swooped down and struck a tree. The top of the oak crashed to the ground.

"You will have to feed me yet another year, my good man," said the Eagle. "I still have not got back my old strength."

And so three years, three months and three days passed. Then the Eagle said to the Merchant:

"Take me again to the place where the tall oaks grow."

And the Merchant brought him to the tall oaks. The Eagle flew still higher than before, struck the biggest oak a mighty blow and smashed it to bits from crown to roots, and the whole forest began to sway.

"Thank you, my good man," said the Eagle. "Now I have all my old strength back. Get off your horse and climb on to my back. I will carry you to my home and reward you for all your kindness."

The Merchant climbed up on to the Eagle's back, the Eagle flew out over the blue sea and went up and up into the sky.

"Look at the blue sea," he said. "Is it big?"

"As big as a wheel," said the Merchant.

The Eagle shook the Merchant off his back and let him know the terror of death, but he caught him before he fell into the sea. Then he flew still higher.

"Look at the blue sea now; is it big?"

"As big as a hen's egg."

The Eagle shook the Merchant off his back, but caught him again before he fell into the sea, and carried him still higher.

"Look at the blue sea; is it big?"

"As big as a poppy seed."

For the third time the Eagle shook the Merchant off his back and the man dropped down out of the very sky, but again the Eagle caught him before he fell into the sea. He caught him and said: "Well, my good man, have you known the terror of death?"

"Yes," said the Merchant. "I thought my end had come."

"So did I when you pointed your gun at me."

And the Eagle flew with the Merchant beyond the sea, straight to the Copper Kingdom.

"Here lives my elder sister," said the Eagle. "We shall be her guests, and she will offer you presents, but take nothing; ask only for the Copper Casket."

So saying, the Eagle struck the ground and turned into a comely youth.

They went through a broad courtyard. The youth's sister saw them and welcomed them with joy.

"Ah, my dear brother, heaven be praised that you are safe. It is more than three years since I saw you last and I had given you up for dead. What shall I treat you to? What will you have?"

"Don't ask me, dear sister—I am one of the family. Ask this good man here who kept me and fed me for three full years and did not let me starve."

She seated them at an oaken table covered with a fine cloth and feasted them royally. Then she took them into her strong room, showed them her countless riches and said to the Merchant:

"Here is gold and silver and precious stones—take all your heart desires."

"I want no gold or silver or precious stones," replied the Merchant. "Give me only the Copper Casket."

"So that is what you want! Well, you shall not have it!"

The brother was ill-pleased with his sister's rudeness, so he turned once more into a swift-winged Eagle, caught up the Merchant and flew away.

"Brother, dear brother, come back!" cried the sister. "I will not even grudge you the Casket!"

"Too late, sister."

And away he flew through the skies.

"Look, my good man, and see what you can see behind and before," said the Eagle.

The Merchant looked and said:

"Behind I see flames; before—blossoming flowers."

"That is the Copper Kingdom burning, and the flowers are blossoming in the Silver Kingdom, where my middle sister lives. We shall be her guests, and she will offer you presents, but take nothing; ask only for the Silver Casket."

When they got to the castle the Eagle struck the ground and turned into a comely youth again.

"Ah, my dear brother!" said his sister. "How come you here? Where have you been? Why have you been away so long? What can I treat you to?"

"Do not ask me, dear sister, I am one of the family. Ask this good man here who kept me and fed me for three full years and did not let me starve."

She seated them at an oaken table covered with a fine cloth and feasted them royally. Then she took them into her strong room. "Here is gold and silver and precious stones—take all your heart desires."

"I want no gold or silver or precious stones. Give me only the Silver Casket."

"Ha, my good man, so that is what you are after! Well you can be sure you will not get it!"

Her brother, the Eagle, was ill-pleased, so he turned himself into a bird, caught up the Merchant and away they flew.

"Brother, dear brother, come back! I will not even grudge you the Casket if you come back!"

"Too late, sister."

And again the Eagle flew high up into the sky.

"Look, my good man, and see what you can see behind and before," said the Eagle.

"Behind I see flames, before—blossoming flowers."

"That is the Silver Kingdom burning, and the flowers are blossoming in the Golden Kingdom, where my youngest sister lives. We shall be her guests, but when she offers you presents take nothing; ask only for the Golden Casket."

On and on flew the Eagle until he reached the Golden Kingdom, where he again turned himself into a comely youth.

"Ah, dear brother," said his sister. "How come you here? Where have you been? Why have you been away so long? What shall I treat you to? What will you have?"

"Do not ask me, I am one of the family. Ask this good man here who kept me and fed me for three full years and did not let me starve."

She seated them at an oaken table covered with a fine cloth and feasted them royally. Then she took the Merchant into her strong room and offered him gifts of gold, and silver, and precious stones.

"I want nothing," said the Merchant. "The Golden Casket is all I ask."

"Take it, and may it bring you luck," said the sister. "You kept my brother in food and drink for three full years and did not let him starve. For my brother's sake I grudge you nothing."

So the Merchant lived on a while and feasted in the Golden Kingdom. At last the time came for parting.

"Farewell," said the Eagle, "and do not think ill of me, but mind: do not open the Casket until you get home."

The Merchant set off homewards. How long he walked is hard to say, but after a while he grew tired and decided to rest. He stopped in a meadow, that was in the land of the Heathen King. For a long time he sat gazing at the Golden Casket, and at last, in spite of himself, he opened it up. As soon as he did so, behold!—a great and gorgeous palace rose before him and a host of servants appeared.

"What is your will? What do you please to want?"

The Merchant asked for food and drink, and when he had refreshed himself he lay down to sleep.

Now the Heathen King saw this grand palace standing on his land and sent forth his messengers, saying:

"Go and find out what knave has built a palace upon my land without my leave. Tell him to go while the going is good!"

When the Merchant got this threatening message, he racked his brains how to get the palace back into the Casket. He thought and thought, but he could not think of anything."

"I would be only too glad to go," he told the messengers, "but I do not know how."

The messengers went back and repeated everything word for word to the Heathen King.

"Let him give me what he has at home unbeknown," said the King, "and I shall put his palace back into the Golden Casket."

There was no help for it: the Merchant had to promise to give the King what he had at home unbeknown, and took his oath upon it. And there and then the Heathen King packed the palace back into the Golden Casket, and the Merchant took it and went on his way.

How long it took him to reach home is hard to say, but at last he got there and was met by his wife.

"Welcome home, my love!" she said. "Where have you wandered all this time?"

"Wherever I was I am no longer there."

"God sent us a baby son while you were away."

"So that is what I have at home unbeknown," thought the Merchant, and he was sorely grieved.

"What is troubling you? Are you not glad to be home?" asked his wife.

"Oh, yes—it is not that," said the Merchant, and he told her all that had befallen him.

They grieved and wept, but you cannot weep from one year's end to the other. So the Merchant opened the Golden Casket, and before them rose a great and gorgeous palace, and he dwelt in it with his wife and his son, and they were happy and prospered.

Ten years and a bit more went by. The Merchant's son grew up to be a sensible and handsome lad.

One morning he got up in low spirits and said to his father:

"Father, I dreamt last night that the Heathen King had ordered me to appear before him. We have kept him waiting long enough, he said, and we ought to know better."

His father and mother wept, gave him their parental blessing and let him go off to strange lands.

He went by a road that was broad and straight, through wide fields and rolling steppe till he came to a wild-wood wilderness. There was nothing in sight save a lonesome little hut with its face to the trees and its back to Ivan the Merchant's Son.

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please!" he said.

The hut did as it was told and turned its back to the trees and its face to him.

Ivan the Merchant's Son went in, and there lay Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag. Baba-Yaga saw him and said:

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"Eh, you old witch! Is this how you welcome a wayfarer, with questions instead of meat and drink?"

Baba-Yaga set food and drink on the table, and when he had eaten, she put him to sleep, and was up betimes the next morning, fairly bursting with questions. Ivan the Merchant's Son told her everything from first to last, and then said:

"Tell me how to get to the Heathen King, Granny."

"Luckily you came this way. If you had not, you would have met your doom. The Heathen King is angry with you for keeping him waiting. You must follow that path till you come to a pond. Hide behind a tree and bide your time. Three doves, three maidens fair, the King's daughters all, will come flying there. They will untie their wings, take off their dresses and bathe in the pond. One of them will have speckled wings. Watch for your chance and snatch the wings, and do not give them up until she promises to marry you. Then everything will come right."

Ivan the Merchant's Son took his leave of Baba-Yaga and went along the path as he had been told.

He went until he came to the pond, where he hid himself behind a leafy tree. By and by three doves, one of them with speckled wings, alighted on the ground and turned into lovely maidens. They took off their wings and took off their dresses and began to bathe. Ivan the Merchant's Son did what he had been told: he crept up softly and stole the speckled wings. Then he waited to see what would happen. The fair maidens finished bathing and came out of the water. Two of them put on their clothes and their wings, turned into doves and flew away, but the third stayed behind to look for her missing wings.

She searched and searched and kept saying:

"Who has taken my wings? Speak up. If you are an old man, you shall be my father; if middle-aged, you shall be my uncle; if young and handsome, you shall be my husband."

Then Ivan the Merchant's Son came out from behind the tree.

"Here are your wings!" he said.

"Tell me, my betrothed, who your kith and kin are and where are you going?"

"I am Ivan the Merchant's Son and I am going to visit your father, the Heathen King."

"And my name is Vasilisa the Wise," said she.

Now Vasilisa the Wise was the favourite daughter of the King, and she was as clever as she was fair. She told her betrothed how to reach the Heathen King, then turned herself into a dove and flew after her sisters.

Ivan the Merchant's Son came to the palace, and the Heathen King made him serve in the scullery, chopping wood and drawing water. Now Slubberer the cook took a dislike to him and began telling the King tales about him.

"Your Majesty," said Slubberer, "Ivan the Merchant's Son boasts that he can fell a whole forest, stack it in a wood pile, plough the land, sow it with wheat, reap the wheat, thresh and grind it and bake pies of it for Your Majesty's breakfast all in a single night."

"Good," said the King, "bring him here."

Ivan the Merchant's Son came before the King.

"What is this boasting I hear—that you can fell a whole forest, plough the land, sow the clean field with wheat, reap the wheat, thresh and grind it, and bake pies for my royal breakfast all in a single night. Now mind you have this all done by to-morrow."

Ivan the Merchant's Son denied having made such a boast, but it was no use: the order was given and had to be obeyed. He came away from the King with his bonny head hanging low. Vasilisa the Wise, the King's daughter, saw him and said:

"What is troubling you?"

"Why should I tell you? You cannot help me."

"Perhaps I can."

So Ivan the Merchant's Son told her what job the Heathen King had ordered him to do.

"Pooh, that is a trifling task. The real task is yet to come. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

At the stroke of midnight Vasilisa the Wise went out on to the palace door-step and called out in a loud voice. Within a minute peasants came flocking from all sides, no end of them. Some began to fell trees, others to dig out the roots, and still others to plough the land. In one place they sowed, in another they were already reaping and threshing. The whole place hummed like a bee-hive, and by morning the grain was ground and the pies were baked. Ivan the Merchant's Son carried the pies to the Heathen King for his breakfast.

"Well done," said the King, and gave orders for him to be rewarded out of the royal treasury."

Slubberer the cook was more angry than ever with Ivan the Merchant's Son and carried more tales to the King.

"Your Majesty," he said, "Ivan the Merchant's Son boasts that he can make a ship overnight that will fly through the skies."

"Good, bring him here!"

Ivan the Merchant's Son came.

"I hear you have boasted to my servants that you can make a marvellous ship in a single night that will fly through the skies, yet you keep it from me. Mind you have such a ship ready by morning!"

Ivan the Merchant's Son was sorely grieved. When Vasilisa the Wise saw him, she asked:

"What is troubling you, why are you so unhappy?"

"How can I help being unhappy when the Heathen King has ordered me to build a flying ship in a single night?"

"Pooh, that is a trifling task. The real task is yet to come. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

At midnight Vasilisa the Wise went out on to the palace door-step and called out in a loud voice. Within a minute carpenters came running from all sides. They got busy with their axes, things went on with a swing, and by morning everything was ready.

"Well done," said the King to Ivan the Merchant's Son. "Now let us go and take a ride."

They got in together, took Slubberer the cook with them, and flew through the skies. As they flew over the yard where the King kept his beasts, the cook leaned out to look, and Ivan the Merchant's Son pushed him over. In a twinkling the wild beasts tore him to bits.

"Oh," cried Ivan the Merchant's Son, "Slubberer has fallen overboard!"

"Serves him right!" said the King. "A cur he lived and a cur he died!"

They came back to the palace.

"You are clever, Ivan the Merchant's Son," said the King, "so here is a third task for you: break in an untamable stallion. If you break him in, I will give you my daughter to wife."

"That is easy," thought Ivan the Merchant's Son, and went away pleased with himself.

Vasilisa the Wise saw him, asked him all about it, and said:

"You are very foolish, Ivan the Merchant's Son. This time you have a hard job to do, a very hard one, for the stallion is the King himself. He will whirl you up into the skies above the unshifting woods, below the shifting clouds, and scatter your poor bones over the field like stones. Go at once to the blacksmiths and tell them to make you a sledge-hammer weighing three *poods,* and when you mount the stallion sit fast and hit him on the head with the hammer to keep him quiet."

The next day the grooms led an untamed stallion out of the stable. They could hardly hold him in—so violently did he snort and kick and rear. The moment Ivan the Merchant's Son got on to his back the stallion whirled him into the sky over the unshifting woods, below the shifting clouds, and flew along swifter than the wind. The rider sat fast and kept hitting the horse over the head with the sledge-hammer. At last the exhausted stallion alighted on the ground. Ivan the Merchant's Son turned the stallion over to the grooms, took a rest and then went to the palace. The Heathen King had his head tied up.

"I have broken the horse in, Your Majesty!"

"Good, come to-morrow to choose a bride, I have a headache just now."

So next morning Vasilisa the Wise said to Ivan the Merchant's Son:

"The King, my father, has three daughters. He will turn all three of us into mares and have you choose a bride. Keep your eyes wide

open and you will see one of the spangles on my bridle grow dim. Then he will turn us into doves; we will peck buckwheat, but every now and then I will flap one wing. Then he will bring us out as maidens fair, all of us alike—the same face, the same height, the same colour of our hair. But I shall wave my handkerchief, and by that sign you shall know me."

As she said, the Heathen King led out three mares, all of them exactly alike, and placed them in a row.

"Choose whichever you will."

Ivan the Merchant's Son took a good look and saw a spangle on one of the bridles grow dim. He seized that bridle and said:

"This is my bride."

"You have chosen a bad one," said the King. "Choose again."

"No, this one will do for me."

"Now choose a second time."

The King let out three doves all of a feather and threw them some buckwheat. Ivan the Merchant's Son noticed that one of the doves kept flapping a wing, and he seized her by the wing.

"This is my bride!"

"You are making a mistake! Mind you do not come to regret it. Choose a third time."

The King led out three maidens fair, each the image of the other. Ivan the Merchant's Son saw one of them wave her handkerchief, and he seized her by the hand.

"This is my bride!"

There was no help for it, so the Heathen King gave Vasilisa the Wise to him in marriage and they had a gay wedding.

After some time Ivan the Merchant's Son decided to run away with Vasilisa the Wise to his own country. So they saddled their horses and set off in the dead of night. Next morning the Heathen King found them gone and sent his men in hot pursuit.

"Put your ear to the ground," said Vasilisa the Wise to her husband, "and tell me what you hear."

He put his ear to the ground and said:

"I hear horses neighing."

Vasilisa the Wise turned him into a kitchen-garden and herself into a cabbage. The pursuers returned to the King empty-handed.

"Your Majesty, we came upon nothing but a kitchen-garden with a head of cabbage growing in it."

"Go and bring me that head of cabbage. This is just one of her tricks."

Off again went the pursuers, and again Ivan the Merchant's Son put his ear to the ground.

"I hear horses neighing," he said.

Vasilisa the Wise turned herself into a well and him into a bright falcon. The falcon just sat on the well and drank water.

The pursuers came to the well, but there the road ended, so they turned back.

"Your Majesty, we saw nothing in the open field but a well, and on that well a bright falcon, drinking water."

So then the Heathen King set off in pursuit himself.

"Put your ear to the ground and tell me what you hear," said Vasilisa the Wise to her husband.

"Oh, I hear a din and a drumming louder than ever."

"That is Father coming after us himself. I am at my wit's end, I do not know what to do," she said.

"No more do I."

Now Vasilisa the Wise had three things with her—a brush, a comb and a towel. Remembering them, she said:

"I have a charm that will protect us from my father, the Heathen King."

She waved the brush backward, and there rose a great forest with no room to slip a hand between the trees, and so big it would take three years to travel round it. The Heathen King gnawed and gnawed at the forest till he cleared a path through it and took up the chase again. He was hot upon their heels, no more than an arm's length away, when Vasilisa the Wise waved her comb backward and a great mountain arose—there was no going round or over it.

The Heathen King dug and dug at the mountain till he had dug a tunnel through it, when he took up the chase again. At that Vasilisa the Wise waved the towel backward and there arose a deep sea. The King galloped down to the shore, but behold!—the way was barred, so he turned homewards.

When Vasilisa the Wise and Ivan the Merchant's Son had almost reached his native land, he said to her:

"I shall go ahead to tell Father and Mother that you are with me. Wait here for me."

"One word of warning," said Vasilisa the Wise to him. "When you get home kiss everyone, but do not kiss your godmother; if you do, you will forget all about me."

Ivan the Merchant's Son returned home, and so glad was he that he kissed everyone, including his godmother. Instantly he forgot all about Vasilisa the Wise, while she, poor thing, stood waiting in the road. Day after day she waited for him, and when he still did not come for her, she went into the town and hired herself out to an old woman. Meanwhile Ivan the Merchant's Son decided to marry, so he wooed a maid and prepared to hold a great wedding-feast.

Vasilisa the Wise got to know of it, so she dressed herself up as a beggar woman and came to the Merchant's house to beg for alms.

"Just a minute," said the Merchant's wife, "I shall bake you a little cake—I do not wish to cut the big wedding-cake."

"Bless you even for that, my dear," said the beggar woman.

But the wedding-cake got burnt while baking, while the little cake turned out fine. The Merchant's wife gave Vasilisa the burnt cake and served the little one at the feast. When they cut it, out flew two doves.

"Kiss me," said the dove to its mate.

"Nay, you will forget me as Ivan the Merchant's Son forgot Vasilisa the Wise."

And the dove said to its mate a second and a third time:

"Kiss me!"

"Nay, you will forget me as Ivan the Merchant's Son forgot Vasilisa the Wise."

At this, Ivan the Merchant's Son guessed who the beggar woman was, and he said to his mother and father:

"This is my wife."

"Very well," said they, "since you already have a wife, live with her."

They gave the disappointed bride to be rich gifts and sent her home, and Ivan the Merchant's Son lived happily with his true love, Vasilisa the Wise, and fortune favoured them to the end of their days.

FENIST THE BRIGHT FALCON

Once upon a time there lived a peasant. His wife died and left him three daughters. The old man wanted to hire a servant-girl to help about the house, but his youngest daughter Máryushka said:

"Don't hire a servant, Father, I shall keep house alone."

And so his daughter Máryushka began keeping house, and a fine housekeeper she made. There was nothing she could not do, and all she did she did splendidly. Her father loved Máryushka dearly and was glad to have such a clever and hard-working daughter. And how lovely she was! But her two sisters were ugly creatures, full of envy and greed, always painted and powdered and dressed in their best. They spent all day putting on new gowns and trying to look better

than they really were. But nothing ever pleased them long—neither gowns, nor shawls, nor high-heeled boots.

Now, one day the old man set out to market and he asked his daughters:

"What shall I buy you, dear daughters, what shall I please you with?"

"Buy us each a kerchief," said the two elder daughters. "And mind it has big flowers on it done in gold."

But his youngest daughter Máryushka stood silent, so the father asked her:

"And what would you like, Máryushka?"

"Dear Father, buy me a feather of Fenist the Bright Falcon."

By and by the father came back with the kerchiefs, but the feather he had not found.

After a while the man went to market again.

"Well, daughters, make your orders," said he.

And the two elder daughters replied eagerly:

"Buy each of us a pair of silver-studded boots."

But Máryushka said again:

"Dear Father, buy me a feather of Fenist the Bright Falcon."

All that day the father walked about the market and bought the boots, but the feather he could not find. And so he came back without it.

Very well, then. He set out on his way to the market for the third time and his elder daughters asked him:

"Buy us each a new gown."

But Máryushka said again:

"Dear Father, buy me a feather of Fenist the Bright Falcon."

All that day the father walked about the market, but still no feather. So he drove out of town, and who should he meet on the way but a little old man.

"Good day, Grandfather!"

"Good day to you, my dear man. Where are you bound for?"

"Back to my village, Grandfather. And I don't know what to do. My youngest daughter asked me to buy her a feather of Fenist the Bright Falcon, but I haven't found it."

"I have the feather you need; it is a charmed one, but I see you are a good man, so you shall have it, come what may."

The little old man took out the feather and gave it to the girl's father, but it looked quite ordinary, so the peasant rode home and he thought: "What good can it be to my Máryushka?"

In a while the old man came home and gave the presents to his daughters. And the two elder ones tried on their new gowns and kept laughing at Máryushka:

"Silly you were, and silly you are! Stick it in your hair now—won't you look fine with it!"

But Máryushka made no answer, she just kept away from them. And when the whole house was asleep, she cast the feather on the floor and said softly:

"Come to me, dear Fenist, Bright Falcon, my cherished bridegroom!"

And there came to her a youth of wondrous beauty. Towards morning he struck the floor and became a falcon. And Máryushka opened the window and the falcon soared up into the blue sky.

And so for three nights she made him welcome. By day he flew about in the blue heavens as a falcon; at nightfall he came back to Máryushka and turned into a handsome youth.

But on the fourth day the wicked sisters caught sight of them and went and told their father.

"Dear daughters," said he, "better mind your own business."

"All right," thought the sisters, "we shall see what comes further."

And they stuck a row of sharp knives into the window-sill and hid by watching.

And after a while the Bright Falcon appeared. He flew up to the window, but could not get into Máryushka's room. So he fluttered and fluttered there, beating against the pane, till all his breast was cut by the blades. But Máryushka slept fast and heard nothing. So at last the falcon said:

"Who needs me, will find me, but not without pains. You shall not find me till you wear out three pairs of iron shoes, and break three iron staffs, and tear three iron caps."

Máryushka heard this and she sprang from her bed to the window. But the falcon was gone, and all he left on the window was a trace of red blood. Máryushka burst into bitter tears, and the little tear-drops washed off the trace of red blood and made her still prettier.

And then she went to her father and said to him:

"Do not chide me, Father, but let me go on my weary way. If I live to see you, I shall, but if I do not, then so must it be."

The man was sorry to part with his sweet daughter, but at last he let her go.

So Máryushka went and ordered three pairs of iron shoes, three iron staffs, and three iron caps. And off she set on her long weary way to seek her heart's desire—Fenist the Bright Falcon. She walked through open fields, she went through dark forests and she climbed tall mountains. The little birds cheered her heart with merry songs, the brooks washed her white face, and the dark woods made her welcome. And no one could do harm to Máryushka, for all the wild beasts—grey wolves, brown bears and red foxes—would come running out towards her. At last one pair of iron shoes wore out, one iron staff broke and one iron cap was torn.

And Máryushka came to a glade in the woods and she saw a little hut on hen's feet spinning round and round.

"Little hut, little hut," said Máryushka, "turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please. Let me in to eat bread within."

The little hut turned its back to the trees and its face to Máryushka, and in she went. And there she saw Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag.

Baba-Yaga caught sight of Máryushka and growled: "Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"Granny dear, I am looking for Fenist the Bright Falcon."

"It's a long way off, pretty maid! You will have to pass through the Thrice-Nine Lands to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom to find him. A wicked sorceress, the queen there, has charmed him with a magic drink and made him marry her. But I shall help you. Here, take this silver saucer and golden egg. When you come to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom get hired as a servant to the Queen. After the day's work is done, take the silver saucer and put the golden egg on it. It will start to roll about all by itself. Should they want to buy it, do not sell it—ask them to let you see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

Máryushka thanked Baba-Yaga and went off. The woods became darker, and she got too frightened to move, when all of a sudden there came a Cat. It jumped up to Máryushka and it purred:

"Have no fear, Máryushka, it will be still worse farther on, but go on and on and do not look back."

And the Cat rubbed against her feet and was gone, while Máryushka went farther. And the deeper she went into the woods the darker it grew. She walked and she walked, till her second pair of iron shoes wore out, her second iron staff broke and her second iron cap got torn. And soon she came to a little hut on hen's feet with a strong fence all round and terrible glowing skulls on the pales.

Máryushka said:

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please. Let me in to eat bread within."

The little hut turned its back to the trees and its face to Máryushka, and Máryushka went in. And there she saw Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag.

Baba-Yaga caught sight of Máryushka and she growled:

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"I want to find Fenist the Bright Falcon."

"And have you been to my sister?"

"Yes, Granny dear, I have."

"All right, then, my beauty, I shall help you. Take this gold needle and silver frame. The needle works all by itself and embroiders red velvet with silver and gold. Should they want to buy it, do not sell it—ask them to let you see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

Máryushka thanked Baba-Yaga and went on her way. It crashed and it banged and it whistled in the forest, and a weird light shone from the skulls hanging round. How terrible it was! But suddenly up ran a Dog:

"Bow-wow, Máryushka, have no fear, darling, it will be still worse, but you go on and never look back."

So it spoke and was gone. Máryushka went on and on, and the woods got darker, scratching her knees and catching at her sleeves. But Máryushka walked and walked and never looked back.

How long she walked is hard to say, but the third pair of iron shoes wore out, the third iron staff broke and the third iron cap was torn. And she came to a glade in the forest and saw a little hut on hen's feet with a tall paling all round and glowing horse skulls on the pales.

Then said Máryushka:

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please."

The hut turned its back to the trees and its face to Máryushka, and in she stepped. And there she saw Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag.

Baba-Yaga saw Máryushka and she growled:

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"I'm looking for Fenist the Bright Falcon, Granny!"

"It is no easy task to find him, my beauty, but I shall help you. Here, take this silver distaff and this gold spindle. Hold the spindle in your hands and it will spin all by itself and the thread will come out all gold."

"Thank you, Granny."

"All right, save your thanks until afterwards, and now listen to me. Should they want to buy the gold spindle, don't sell it, but ask them to let you see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

Máryushka thanked Baba-Yaga and went on her way. And it roared and rumbled and whistled in the forest. The owls wheeled round, the mice crawled out of their holes and rushed straight to Máryushka. Then all of a sudden a Grey Wolf ran up to her and said:

"Have no fear, Máryushka. Get on my back and never look behind."

So she sat on the Wolf's back and off they flashed out of sight. They passed wide steppes and velvet meadows, they crossed honey rivers with custard banks and they climbed tall mountains that touched the clouds. On and on raced Máryushka till she reached a crystal palace with a carved porch and fancy windows. And there was the Queen herself looking out of a window.

"Well," said the Wolf, "we've come, Máryushka. Climb down from my back and get hired as a servant at the palace."

Máryushka climbed off, took her bundle and thanked the Wolf. Then she went up to the Queen and bowed.

"I beg your pardon," she said, "I don't know your name; aren't you in need of a servant-girl?"

"Yes," said the Queen, "it is long I have looked for a servant, but the one I need must be able to spin, weave and embroider."

"All that I can do," said Máryushka.

"Then come in and set to work."

And so Máryushka became a servant-girl. She worked all the day until night-time, and then she took out her golden egg and silver saucer and said:

"Roll about, golden egg, on your silver saucer, show me my Fenist dear."

And the golden egg rolled about till Fenist the Bright Falcon appeared before her. Máryushka gazed and gazed at him and her tears ran fast.

"Fenist, my Fenist, why have you left poor me to shed tears without you?"

And the Queen overheard her and said:

"Máryushka, sell me your silver saucer and golden egg."

"No," replied Máryushka, "they are not to be sold, but you may have them free if you let me see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

The Queen thought for a while and then she said:

"All right, let it be so. To-night, when he falls asleep, I will let you see him."

So when night came, Máryushka went to his bedroom and saw Fenist the Bright Falcon. Her darling lay fast asleep and could not be awakened. She looked and she looked and she could not look enough, and she kissed him on his sugary mouth, and she pressed him to her white bosom, but her darling slept on and did not awaken. Morning set in, but still Máryushka could not rouse her beloved.

All that day she worked and in the evening took her silver frame and gold needle. And as it sewed, Máryushka kept saying:

"Get embroidered, little towel, get embroidered, little towel, let my Fenist the Bright Falcon wipe his face."

The Queen overheard her and asked:

"Máryushka, sell me your silver frame and gold needle."

"Sell I will not," replied Máryushka, "but you may have them free if you let me see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

The Queen thought hard, but at last she said:

"All right, let it be so. Come and see him to-night."

Night came on, and Máryushka entered the bedroom and she saw her Fenist the Bright Falcon lying fast asleep.

"O my Fenist, Bright Falcon, arise, wake up!"

But her Fenist slept on as fast as ever, and Máryushka could not wake him up, try as she might.

At daybreak Máryushka set to work and took out her silver distaff and golden spindle. And the Queen saw her and began asking her to sell them. But Máryushka replied:

"Sell them I will not, but you may have them for nothing if only you let me see Fenist the Bright Falcon."

"All right," said the other and she thought to herself: "She won't wake him up anyhow."

Night drew on and Máryushka entered the bedroom, but Fenist lay as fast asleep as ever.

"O my Fenist, Bright Falcon, arise, wake up!"

But Fenist slept on and would not awaken.

Máryushka tried and tried again to wake him, but she could not. And soon it would be morning. So Máryushka burst out weeping and she said:

"Dearest Fenist, arise and open your eyes, look at your Máryushka, press her close!"

And a hot tear fell from Máryushka's eyes on the bare shoulder of Fenist and burnt it. Fenist the Bright Falcon stirred and he opened his eyes and saw Máryushka. And then he took her in his arms and kissed her.

"Can it be you, my Máryushka? So you have worn out three pairs of iron shoes and broken three iron staffs and torn three iron caps? Cry no more. Let us go home, now."

And they started getting ready for the homeward journey. But the Queen noticed it and she bade her trumpeters spread the news of her husband's betrayal through all the towns of the land.

And the princes and merchants of her land came together to hold council and decide how to punish Fenist the Bright Falcon.

And then Fenist the Bright Falcon stood up and said:

"Who do you think is the real wife, the one who loves me truly or the one that sells and betrays me?"

Everyone had to agree that only Máryushka was fit to be his wife.

After that they went back to their own land. And they had a grand feast there, and all the guns fired and all the trumpets blew at their wedding. And the feast they had was so grand, it is still remembered. And they both lived happily ever afterwards.

CHESTNUT-GREY

Once upon a time there lived an old man who had three sons. The two elder sons were well-favoured young men who liked to wear fine clothes and were thrifty husbandmen, but the youngest, Ivan the Fool, was none of those things. He spent most of his time at home sitting on the stove ledge and only going out to gather mushrooms in the forest.

When the time came for the old man to die, he called his three sons to his side and said to them:

"When I die, you must come to my grave every night for three nights and bring me some bread to eat."

The old man died and was buried and that night the time came for the eldest brother to go to his grave. But the young man was too lazy or else too frightened to go, and he said to Ivan the Fool:

"If only you go in my stead to our father's grave to-night, Ivan, I will buy you a cake."

Ivan readily agreed, took some bread and went to his father's grave. He sat down by the grave and waited to see what would happen. On the stroke of midnight the earth crumbled apart and the old father rose out of the grave and said:

"Who is there? Is it you, my first-born? Tell me how fares Russ: are the dogs barking, the wolves howling or my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

Then the father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and lay down in his grave again. As for Ivan, he went home, stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way.

When he came home, his eldest brother asked:

"Did you see our father?"

"Yes, I did," Ivan replied.

"Did he eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes. He ate till he could eat no more."

Another day passed by, and it was the second brother's turn to go to the grave. But he was too lazy or else too frightened to go and said to Ivan:

"If only you go in my stead, Ivan, I shall make you a pair of bast shoes."

"Very well," said Ivan, "I shall go."

He took some bread, went to his father's grave and sat there waiting. On the stroke of midnight the earth crumbled apart, the old father rose out of the grave and said:

"Who is there? Is it you, my second-born? Tell me how fares Russ: are the dogs barking, the wolves howling or my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

Then the father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and went back to his grave. And Ivan went home, stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way. He came home and his second brother asked him:

"Did our father eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes," Ivan replied. "He ate till he could eat no more."

On the third night it was Ivan's turn to go to the grave and he said to his brothers:

"For two nights I have gone to our father's grave. Now it is your turn to go and I will stay home and rest."

"Oh, no," the brothers replied. "You must go again, Ivan, for you are used to it."

"Very well," Ivan agreed, "I shall go."

He took some bread and went to the grave, and on the stroke of midnight the earth crumbled apart and the old father rose out of the grave.

"Who is there?" said he. "Is it you, my third-born? Tell me how fares Russ: are the dogs barking, the wolves howling or my child weeping?"

And Ivan replied:

"It is I, your son Ivan, Father. And all is quiet in Russ."

The father ate his fill of the bread Ivan had brought and said to him:

"You were the only one who obeyed my command, Ivan. You were not afraid to come to my grave for three nights. Now you must go out into the open fields and shout: 'Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey!

I call thee nigh to do or die!' When the horse appears before you, climb into his right ear and come out of his left, and you will turn into as comely a lad as ever was seen. Then mount the horse and go where you will."

Ivan took the bridle his father gave him, thanked him and went home, stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way. He came home and his brothers asked him:

"Did you see our father, Ivan?"

"Yes, I did," Ivan replied.

"Did he eat of the bread you brought?"

"Yes, he ate till he could eat no more and he bade me not to come to his grave any more."

Now, at this very time the Tsar had a call sounded abroad for all handsome, unmarried young men to gather at court. The Tsar's daughter Princess Lovely had ordered a castle of twelve pillars and twelve layers of oak logs to be built for herself. And there she meant to sit at the window of the top chamber and await the one who would leap on his steed as high as her window and plant a kiss on her lips. To him who succeeded, whether high- or low-born, the Tsar would give his daughter Princess Lovely in marriage and half his tsardom besides.

News of this came to the ears of Ivan's brothers, who agreed amongst themselves to try their luck.

They gave their goodly steeds a feed of oats and led them out of the stables and themselves put on their best apparel and combed down their curly locks. And Ivan, who was sitting on the stove ledge behind the chimney, said to them:

"Take me with you, my brothers, and let me try my luck, too."

"You silly sit-by-the-stove!" laughed they. "You will only be mocked at if you go with us. Better go and hunt for mushrooms in the forest."

The brothers mounted their goodly steeds, cocked their hats, gave a whistle and a whoop and galloped off down the road in a cloud of dust. Ivan took the bridle his father had given him, went out into the open fields and shouted as his father had taught him:

"Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey!
I call thee nigh to do or die!"

And lo and behold! a charger came running toward him. The earth shook under his hoofs, his nostrils spurted flame, and clouds of smoke poured from his ears. The charger galloped up to Ivan, stood stock-still and said:

"What do you wish, Ivan?"

Ivan stroked the steed's neck, bridled him, climbed into his right ear and came out through his left. And lo! He was turned into a youth as fair as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that was ever born. He got up on Chestnut-Grey's back and set off for the Tsar's palace. On went Chestnut-Grey for a week or a day, passing mountain and dale with a swish of his tail, skirting houses and trees as quick as the breeze.

When at last Ivan arrived at court, the palace grounds were aswarm with people. There stood the castle of twelve pillars and twelve layers of oak logs, and in its very top, at the window of her chamber, sat Princess Lovely.

The Tsar stepped out on to the porch and said:

"He from amongst you, young men, who leaps up on his steed as high as yonder window and plants a kiss upon my daughter's lips, shall have her in marriage and half my tsardom besides."

One after another the wooers of Princess Lovely came and pranced and galloped, but, alas, the window was out of

their reach. Ivan's two brothers tried with the rest, but with no better success.

When Ivan's turn came, he sent Chestnut-Grey at a gallop and with a whoop and a shout leapt up as high as the highest layer of logs but two. On he came again and leapt up as high as the highest layer but one. One more chance was left him, and he pranced and whirled Chestnut-Grey round and round till the steed chafed and fumed. Then, bounding like fire past her window, he made a great leap and planted a kiss on the honey-sweet lips of Princess Lovely. And the Princess struck his brow with her seal-ring and left her stamp there.

The people roared: "Hold him! Stop him!" but Ivan and his steed were gone in a cloud of dust.

Off they galloped to the open fields, and Ivan climbed into Chestnut-Grey's left ear and came out through his right, and lo! he was brought to his proper shape again. Then he let Chestnut-Grey go free and himself went home, stopping to gather some mushrooms on the way. He entered the house, bound his forehead up with a rag, climbed up on the stove ledge and lay there as before.

By and by his brothers arrived and began to tell him where they had been and what they had seen.

"Many were the wooers of the Princess, and handsome, too," they said. "But one there was who outshone them all. He leapt up on his fiery steed to the Princess' window and he kissed her lips. We saw him come, but we never saw him go."

Said Ivan from his perch behind the chimney:

"Perhaps it was me you saw."

His brothers flew into a temper and said:

"Stop your silly talk, Fool! Sit there on your stove and eat your mushrooms."

Then Ivan untied the rag that covered the stamp of the Princess' seal-ring, and at once a bright glow lit up the hut. The brothers were frightened and cried:

"What are you doing, Fool? You'll burn down the house!"

The next day the Tsar held a feast to which he summoned all his subjects, boyars and nobles and common folk, rich and poor, young and old.

Ivan's brothers, too, prepared to attend the feast.

"Take me with you, my brothers," Ivan begged.

"What?" they laughed. "You will only be mocked at by all who see you. Stay here on your stove and eat your mushrooms."

The brothers then mounted their goodly steeds and rode off and Ivan followed them on foot. He came to the Tsar's palace and seated himself in a far corner. Princess Lovely now began to make a round of all the guests. She offered each a drink from the cup of mead she carried and she looked at their brows to see if her seal were not there.

She made a round of all the guests except Ivan, and when she approached him her heart sank. He was all smutted with soot and his hair stood on end.

Said Princess Lovely:

"Who are you? Where do you come from? And why is your brow bound with that rag?"

"I hurt myself in falling," Ivan replied.

The Princess unbound the rag and the palace was at once lit up by a bright glow.

"That is my seal!" she cried. "Here is my betrothed!"

The Tsar came up to Ivan, looked at him and said:

"Oh, no, Princess Lovely! This cannot be your betrothed! He is all sooty and very plain."

Said Ivan to the Tsar:

"Allow me to wash my face, Tsar."

The Tsar gave him leave to do so, and Ivan came out into the courtyard and shouted as his father had taught him to:

"Chestnut-Grey, hear and obey!
I call thee nigh to do or die!"

And lo and behold! Chestnut-Grey came galloping toward him. The earth shook under his hoofs, his nostrils spurted flame, and clouds of smoke poured from his ears. Ivan climbed into his right ear and came out through his left and was again turned into a youth as fair as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that was ever born. All the people in the palace gave a great gasp when they saw him.

No words were lost after that.

Ivan married Princess Lovely, and a merry feast was held in the palace to celebrate their wedding.

PRINCE IVAN AND GREY WOLF

Once upon a time there was a Tsar named Berendei. He had three sons. The youngest was called Ivan.

And the Tsar had a beautiful garden with an apple-tree in it that bore golden apples.

One day the Tsar found that somebody was stealing his golden apples. The Tsar was very unhappy about this. He sent watchmen into the garden, but they were unable to catch the thief.

The Tsar was so grieved that he could not touch food or drink. His sons tried to cheer him. "Do not grieve, Father dear," they said, "we shall keep watch over the garden ourselves."

The eldest son said: "To-day it is my turn to keep watch."

And he went into the garden. He walked about all evening but saw no one, so he flung himself down on the soft grass and went to sleep.

In the morning the Tsar said to him: "Have you brought me good news? Have you discovered who the thief is?"

"No, Father. I did not close my eyes all night, but I saw no one."

The next night the middle son went out to keep watch, and he, too, went to sleep. On the next morning he said he had seen no thief.

It was now the youngest son's turn to go and keep watch. When Prince Ivan went to watch his father's garden he did not so much as sit down, let alone lie down. If he felt that he was getting sleepy, he would wash his face in dew and become wide awake at once.

And in the dead of night what should he see but a light shining in the garden. It got brighter and brighter and lit up everything around. And there on the apple-tree sat the Fire-Bird pecking at the golden apples.

Prince Ivan crept up to the tree and caught the bird by the tail. But the Fire-Bird wriggled free and flew away, leaving a feather from its tail in the Prince's hand.

Next morning Prince Ivan went to his father.

"Well, son, have you caught the thief?" asked the Tsar.

"Dear Father," said Prince Ivan, "I have not caught him, but I have discovered who he is. See, he has sent you this feather as a keepsake. The Fire-Bird is the thief, Father."

The Tsar took the feather, and from that time he cheered up and began to eat and drink again. But one fine day he fell to thinking about the Fire-Bird.

He called his sons and said to them:

"My dear boys, I would have you saddle your trusty steeds and set out to see the wide world. Perhaps you will come upon the Fire-Bird."

The sons bowed to their father, saddled their trusty steeds and set out. The eldest son took one road, the middle son another, and Prince Ivan a third.

How long Prince Ivan travelled is hard to say, but one hot afternoon he felt so tired that he got off his horse and lay down to rest.

Nobody knows whether he slept for a long time or a short time, but when he woke up his horse was gone. So he went to look for it. He walked and walked, and at last he found the remains of his horse: nothing but bones, picked clean.

Prince Ivan was in great distress. How could he continue on his journey without a horse?

"Ah, well," he thought, "I must make the best of it."

And he went on foot. He walked and walked till he was dead tired, when he sat down on the soft grass, sad and dispirited. Suddenly, there's no telling how, up came running a Grey Wolf.

"Why are you sitting here so sad and forlorn, Prince Ivan?" asked Grey Wolf.

"How can I help being sad, Grey Wolf? I have lost my trusty steed."

"It was I who ate up your horse, Prince Ivan. But I am sorry for you. What are you doing so far from home and where are you going?"

"Father has sent me out into the wide world to seek the Fire-Bird."

"But you could not reach the Fire-Bird on that horse in three years. I alone know where it lives. So be it—since I have eaten up your horse, I shall be your true and faithful servant. Get on my back and hold fast."

Prince Ivan got on to his back and Grey Wolf was off like a flash. Green forests swept by, blue lakes skimmed past, and at last they came to a castle with a high wall round it.

"Listen carefully, Prince Ivan," said Grey Wolf, "and remember what I say. Climb over that wall. You have nothing to fear—we have come at a lucky hour; all the guards are sleeping. In a chamber within the tower you will see a window, in that window hangs a golden cage, and in that cage is the Fire-Bird. Take the bird and hide it in your bosom, but mind you do not touch the cage!"

Prince Ivan climbed over the wall and saw the tower with the golden cage in the window and the Fire-Bird in the cage. He took the bird out and hid it in his bosom, but could not tear his eyes away from the cage. "Ah, what a handsome golden cage!" he thought longingly. "How can I leave it here!" And he forgot the wolf's warning. The moment he touched the cage, a hue and cry rose within the castle—trumpets trumpeted, drums drummed, the guards woke up, seized Prince Ivan and marched him off to Tsar Afron.

"Who are you and whence have you come?" Tsar Afron demanded angrily.

"I am Prince Ivan, son of Tsar Berendei."

"Fie, shame on you! To think of a royal prince being a thief!"

"But you should not have let your bird steal apples from our garden."

"If you had come and told me about it in an honest way, I would have made you a present of the Bird out of respect for your father, Tsar Berendei. But now I shall spread the ill fame of your family far and wide. Or no—perhaps I will not, after all. If you do me a favour, I shall forgive you. In a certain kingdom there is a Tsar named Kusman and he has a Horse with a Golden Mane. Bring me that Horse and I will make you a gift of the Fire-Bird and the cage besides."

Prince Ivan, very much put out, went back to Grey Wolf.

"I told you not to touch the cage," said the Wolf. "Why did you not heed my warning?"

"I am sorry, Grey Wolf, please forgive me."

"Being sorry won't do much good. But there, get on my back again. I must not go back on my word."

And off went Grey Wolf with Prince Ivan. It is hard to say how long they travelled, but at last they came to the castle where the Horse with the Golden Mane was kept.

"Climb over the wall, Prince Ivan, the guards are asleep. Go to the stable and take the Horse, but mind you do not touch the bridle."

Prince Ivan climbed into the castle. All the guards were asleep, so he went to the stable and caught Golden Mane, but he could not help touching the bridle—it was made of gold and set with precious stones—a fitting bridle for such a horse.

No sooner did Prince Ivan touch the bridle than a hue and cry was raised within the castle. Trumpets trumpeted, drums drummed, the guards woke up, seized Prince Ivan and marched him off to Tsar Kusman.

"Who are you and whence have you come?"

"I am Prince Ivan."

"Fancy stealing a horse! What a foolish thing to do! A common peasant would not stoop to it. But I shall forgive you, Prince Ivan, if you do me a favour. Tsar Dalmat has a daughter named Yelena the Fair. Steal her and bring her to me, and I shall make you a present of my Horse with the Golden Mane and its bridle besides."

Prince Ivan was more put out than ever and he went back to Grey Wolf.

"I told you not to touch the bridle, Prince Ivan!" said the Wolf. "Why did you not heed my warning?"

"I am sorry, Grey Wolf, please forgive me."

"Being sorry won't do much good. But there, get on my back again."

And off went Grey Wolf with Prince Ivan. By and by they came to the kingdom of Tsar Dalmat. Yelena the Fair was strolling about the castle garden with her maids and attendants.

"This time *I* shall go," said Grey Wolf. "You go back the way we came and I will catch you up soon."

So Prince Ivan went back the way he had come, and Grey Wolf jumped over the wall into the garden. He crouched behind a bush and peeped out. There was Yelena the Fair with all her maids and attendants. As they strolled about the garden, Yelena fell behind her maids and attendants, and Grey Wolf instantly seized her, tossed her across his back, jumped over the wall and was gone in a trice.

Prince Ivan was walking back the way he had come, when all of a sudden he saw Grey Wolf with Yelena the Fair on his back. Was he glad! "You get on my back too, and be quick about it, or they may catch us," said Grey Wolf.

Grey Wolf sped down the path with Prince Ivan and Yelena the Fair on his back. Green forests swept by, blue lakes and rivers skimmed past. How long the Wolf ran it is hard to say, but by and by they came to Tsar Kusman's kingdom.

"Why are you so silent and sad, Prince Ivan?" asked Grey Wolf.

"How can I help being sad, Grey Wolf? It breaks my heart to part with such loveliness, to think that I must exchange Yelena the Fair for a horse."

"You need not part with such loveliness. We shall hide her somewhere, I will turn myself into Yelena the Fair and you shall take me to the Tsar instead."

So they hid Yelena the Fair in a hut in the forest. Grey Wolf turned a somersault, and when he landed on his feet he was the very image of Yelena the Fair. Prince Ivan took him to Tsar Kusman. The Tsar was delighted and ever so grateful.

"Thank you for bringing me a bride, Prince Ivan. Now the Horse with the Golden Mane and the bridle are yours."

Prince Ivan mounted the horse and went for Yelena the Fair. He seated her upon the horse and they rode off.

Tsar Kusman held a wedding celebration and feasted the whole day long, and when bedtime came he led Yelena the Fair into the bedroom, but just as he got into bed with her what should he see but the muzzle of a wolf instead of the face of his young wife! The Tsar got such a fright that he tumbled out of bed, and Grey Wolf sprang up and ran away.

Grey Wolf caught up with Prince Ivan and said:

"Why are you sad, Prince Ivan?"

"How can I help being sad? I cannot bear to think of exchanging the Horse with the Golden Mane for the Fire-Bird."

"Cheer up, I will help you," said the Wolf.

Soon they came to the kingdom of Tsar Afron. "Hide that horse and Yelena the Fair," said the Wolf. "I will turn myself into Golden Mane and you shall take me to Tsar Afron."

So they hid Yelena the Fair and Golden Mane in the woods. Grey Wolf turned a somersault and became Golden Mane, and Prince Ivan led him off to Tsar Afron. The Tsar was delighted and gave him the Fire-Bird in the golden cage.

Prince Ivan walked back to the woods, seated Yelena the Fair upon Golden Mane, took the golden cage with the Fire-Bird in it and set off homewards.

Meanwhile Tsar Afron had the gift horse brought to him, and he was just about to get on to its back, when it turned into a grey wolf. The Tsar got such a fright that he fell down where he stood, and Grey Wolf ran away and soon caught up with Prince Ivan.

"Now good-bye," said he, "I can go no farther."

Prince Ivan got off the horse, made three low bows, and humbly thanked Grey Wolf.

"Do not say good-bye for good, you may still have need of me," said Grey Wolf.

"Why should I need him again?" thought Prince Ivan. "All my wishes have been fulfilled."

He got on to Golden Mane's back and rode on with Yelena the Fair and the Fire-Bird. When they reached his own country he decided to stop for a bite to eat. He had a little bread with him, and they drank fresh water from the spring. Then they lay down to rest.

No sooner did Prince Ivan fall asleep than his brothers came by and almost rode him down. They had been to other lands in search of the Fire-Bird, and were now coming home empty-handed.

When they saw that Prince Ivan had got everything, they said:

"Let us kill our brother Ivan, and all his spoils will be ours."

And with that they killed Prince Ivan. Then they got on Golden Mane's back, took the Fire-Bird, seated Yelena the Fair on a horse and said:

"See that you say not a word about this at home!"

So there lay poor Ivan on the ground, with the ravens circling over his head. All of a sudden Grey Wolf came by and seized a Raven and her fledgling.

"Fly and fetch me dead and living water, Raven," said the Wolf. "If you do, I shall let your nestling go."

The Raven flew off—what else could she do?—while the Wolf held her fledgling. By and by she came back with dead and living water. Grey Wolf sprinkled the dead water on Prince Ivan's wounds and they healed. Then he sprinkled him with the living water and he came back to life.

"My, I slept like the dead!" said Prince Ivan.

"Aye," said Grey Wolf, "and but for me you would never have wakened. Your own brothers killed you and took away all your treasures. Get on to my back, quick."

Off they went in hot pursuit and caught the two brothers up. Grey Wolf tore them to bits and scattered the bits over the field.

Prince Ivan bowed to Grey Wolf and took leave of him for good.

Then Prince Ivan rode home on the Horse with the Golden Mane and brought his father the Fire-Bird and himself a bride—Yelena the Fair.

Tsar Berendei was ever so pleased and asked his son many questions. Prince Ivan told him how Grey Wolf had helped him, and how his brothers had killed him while he slept and Grey Wolf had torn them to bits.

At first Tsar Berendei was sorely grieved, but he soon got over it. And Prince Ivan married Yelena the Fair and they lived happily ever after.

GO I KNOW NOT WHERE AND FETCH I KNOW NOT WHAT

In a certain kingdom there lived a Tsar. He was a single man, unmarried, and he had in his service an archer named Andrei.

One day the Archer went a-hunting. He walked about the woods all day long, but no game came his way. It was getting late, so, disappointed, he turned homewards. Suddenly he saw a dove sitting on a tree.

"I may as well have a shot at this," he thought.

So he shot and winged the dove, and it dropped from the tree on to the damp earth. Andrei picked it up and was about to wring its neck and put it in his pouch, when the bird spoke to him in a human voice:

"Do not kill me, Archer Andrei, do not wring my poor neck. Take me home alive and put me in the window. But mind, as soon as I begin to doze, strike me with your right hand, and great good fortune shall be yours."

Andrei the Archer could not believe his ears. "What is this?" he thought. "It looks exactly like a bird, yet speaks in a human voice." He took the dove home, put it in the window and stood waiting.

By and by the dove tucked its head under its wing and dozed off. Andrei kept in mind what it had told him and struck it with his right hand. The dove fell on the floor and turned into Princess Maria, a maiden as fair as the sky at dawn, the fairest maiden ever born.

Princess Maria said to the Archer:

"You have managed to catch me, now manage to keep me. Happy is the wooing that is not long a-doing. Marry me and I will make you an honest and cheerful wife."

And so the matter was settled. Andrei the Archer married Princess Maria, and he and his young wife were very happy together. But he did not neglect his duties. Every morning before daybreak he went into the woods, shot wild fowl and took them to the royal kitchen. So they went on for a bit, till one day Princess Maria said:

"It is a poor life we are leading, Andrei."

"I'm afraid it is."

"If you borrow a hundred rubles and buy me silks with it, I shall see that our life is improved."

So Andrei did what she said. He went to his friends, borrowed a ruble from one, two from another, and bought silks with the money. He brought the silks to his wife, who said:

"Now go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

Andrei went to bed, and Princess Maria sat down to weave. All night long she wove and made a carpet the like of which the world

had never seen. On it was pictured the whole kingdom, with all its towns and villages, its woods and fields, the birds in the sky, beasts in the forests, fish in the seas, and the moon and sun shining down upon it all.

In the morning Princess Maria gave her husband the carpet and said:

"Take it to Merchants' Row and sell it, but mind do not name your own price. Take whatever they give you."

Andrei took the carpet, hung it over his arm and went to Merchants' Row.

Presently a merchant ran up to him and said:

"How much do you want for that, my good man?"

"You are a merchant, name your own price."

The merchant thought and thought, but he could not price the carpet. Then another came up, and after him another and still another. Soon there was a whole crowd of them. They all looked at the carpet and marvelled, but none could price it.

Just then the Tsar's Councillor rode by and wondered what all the fuss was about. He got out of his carriage, elbowed his way through the crowd and said:

"Good morning, merchants. What is going on here?"

"We cannot price this carpet," they said.

The Tsar's Councillor looked at the carpet and was struck with wonder.

"Now tell me the truth, Archer, where did you get this marvellous carpet?" he asked.

"My wife made it," said the Archer.

"And how much do you want for it?"

"I do not know. My wife said I was to take whatever I was given."

"Then here's ten thousand rubles, Archer."

Andrei took the money, handed over the carpet and went home. And the Tsar's Councillor rode to the palace and showed the carpet to the Tsar.

The Tsar was dumbfounded to see his whole kingdom spread before his eyes. It fairly took his breath away!

"Say what you like, but I shall not give you back this carpet," said the Tsar.

He got out twenty thousand rubles and handed it to his Councillor. The Councillor took the money and thought:

"It does not matter, I shall order myself another one still better."

He got into his carriage again and rode to the outskirts of the town. He found the hut in which Andrei the Archer lived and knocked at the door. Princess Maria opened it. The Tsar's Councillor put one foot over the threshold, but his other foot remained rooted to the ground. He lost his tongue and forgot what he had come for. There before him stood a maiden so beautiful that he could have feasted his eyes on her for ever.

Princess Maria waited for him to speak, and when he did not say a word, she turned him about and shut the door on him. In a while he collected his wits and took himself home. But from that day he could neither eat nor drink for thinking of the Archer's wife.

The Tsar saw there was something wrong with the man and asked him what it was.

"Ah, Your Majesty, I have seen the Archer's wife and I cannot get her out of my mind. She has bewitched me, and I can do nothing to break the spell."

So the Tsar thought he too would take a look at the Archer's wife. He put on common clothes, went to the outskirts of the town, found the hut in which Andrei the Archer lived and knocked at the door. Princess Maria opened the door. The Tsar put one foot over the threshold,

but his other foot remained rooted to the ground, and he stared dumbstruck at the heavenly face before him.

Princess Maria waited for the Tsar to speak, and when he did not say a word, she turned him about and shut the door on him.

The Tsar was badly smitten. "Why should I live alone?" he thought. "Here is a lovely bride for me. She was meant to be a Tsar's wife, not an Archer's."

When he got back to his palace, a wicked thought came into his head. He thought to steal the wife from a living husband. He sent for his Councillor and said:

"Think of a way to get rid of Andrei the Archer. I mean to marry his wife. If you help me, I shall reward you with towns and villages and gold, but if you do not, I shall cut your head off."

The Tsar's Councillor was sorely troubled. He could think of no way to get rid of the Archer, and so he went to a tavern to drown his sorrow in wine.

A tavern frequenter in a ragged *caftan* came up to him and said:

"What is it you feel so badly about, Councillor?"

"Be off with you, ragamuffin!"

"Instead of driving me away, offer me a drink and I will give you some good advice."

The Tsar's Councillor offered him a glass of wine and told him his trouble.

"Andrei the Archer is a simple fellow," said the ragamuffin. "It would be easy to get rid of him if his wife were not so clever. We must think of something that will baffle her. Go back and tell the Tsar to send Andrei the Archer to the Next World to find out how his dead father, the old Tsar, is doing. Andrei will go and never come back."

The Tsar's Councillor thanked the ragamuffin and ran back to the Tsar.

"I have found a way to get rid of the Archer," said he, and he told the Tsar what to do. The Tsar was mighty pleased and sent at once for Andrei the Archer.

"Well, Andrei," he said, "you have served me faithfully, but there is one more service I must ask of you. Go to the Next World and find out how my father is doing. If you do not, I'll out with my sword and off with your head."

Andrei went home and sat down on the bench looking very unhappy.

"Why are you so sad, Andrei?" asked Princess Maria.

Andrei told her what the Tsar wanted him to do.

"What a thing to worry about!" said Princess Maria. "A trifling task; the real task is yet to come. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

As soon as Andrei woke up next morning Princess Maria gave him a bag of biscuits and a gold ring.

"Go to the Tsar and ask him to let you take the Councillor with you, so that he will know you have really been to the Next World. When you set forth with your way-companion, throw the ring in front of you and it will show you the way."

Andrei took the bag of biscuits and the ring, said good-bye to his wife and went to ask the Tsar to send his Councillor with him. The Tsar could not refuse, and so the two started out together. Andrei threw down the ring and off it rolled. He followed it through open fields and mossy marshes, across lakes and rivers, while behind him trudged the Tsar's Councillor.

Whenever they grew tired of walking, they would eat some biscuits, then set off again.

How far they walked is hard to tell, but in good time they came to a great wild-wood wilderness. They climbed down a deep ravine, and there the ring stopped.

Andrei and the Tsar's Councillor sat down to eat some biscuits. And who should they see but the doddering old Tsar pulling a cart of fire-wood (and a great big load it was, too), while two devils, one on his right, the other on his left, drove him on with cudgels.

"Look," said Andrei, "isn't that the Tsar's dead father?"

"It is indeed," said the Councillor.

"Hi, gentlemen!" shouted Andrei to the devils, "let that dead man go for a minute, I should like to have a word with him."

"Do you think we have time to stand and wait?" replied the devils. "Or do you expect us to draw the wood ourselves?"

"I have a man here who can take his place," said Andrei.

So the devils unhitched the old Tsar and hitched the Councillor to the cart instead. Then they struck him with their cudgels, one on the left side, the other on the right. He bent double but pulled as best as he could.

Andrei asked the old Tsar how life was treating him.

"Ah, Archer Andrei," said the Tsar, "I am having a bad time of it in this world. Remember me to my son and tell him not to ill-treat people, or else he too will have a bad time of it when he gets here."

They had scarcely finished talking when the devils came back with the empty cart. Andrei took his leave of the old Tsar, the Councillor rejoined him, and they set out for home.

By and by they came to their own country and went to the palace. When the Tsar saw the Archer he flew at him in a rage.

"How dare you come back!" he said.

"I have seen your dead father in the Next World. He's having a bad time there. He sends you his love and says you are not to ill-treat people if you do not want to have just as bad a time of it as he has."

"And how are you going to prove you have been to the Next World and seen my father?"

"I can prove it by the marks the devils' cudgels left on your Councillor's back."

That was proof enough for the Tsar, so he had to let Andrei go—what else could he do? Then he said to his Councillor:

"If you do not think of a way to get rid of that Archer I shall cut your head off."

The Councillor was more sorely troubled than ever. He went to the tavern, sat down at a table and called for wine. Just then that same ragamuffin came up to him and said:

"What is it you feel so badly about, Councillor? Offer me a drink and I will give you some good advice."

The Councillor offered him a glass of wine and told him his trouble.

"Do not worry," said the ragamuffin. "Go back and tell the Tsar to have the Archer do him this service—a thing hard to think of, let alone to do: he is to go beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom and get Croon-Cat."

The Councillor ran off to the Tsar and told him how to get rid of the Archer. The Tsar sent for Andrei.

"Well, Andrei, you have done me one service, now do me another. Go beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom and bring me Croon-Cat. If you do not, I'll out with my sword and off with your head."

Andrei went home with drooping head and told his wife what task the Tsar had set him.

"What a thing to worry about!" said Princess Maria. "A trifling task; the real task is yet to come. Go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

Andrei went to bed, and Princess Maria went to the smithy and told the blacksmiths to forge three iron caps, a pair of iron tongs and three rods—one of iron, another of copper, and the third of tin.

Early next morning Princess Maria woke Andrei up.

"Here are three caps, a pair of tongs and three rods—go beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom. Three *versts* short of it, you will feel very sleepy—that will be Croon-Cat casting her spell over you. But mind you don't fall asleep. Fold your hands, drag your feet, and if need be, roll along the ground. If you fall asleep, Croon-Cat will kill you."

Princess Maria told him just what to do and how to do it, and then saw him off on his errand.

The tale is short in telling, but the deed is long in doing. Andrei the Archer came at last to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom, and three *versts* short of it he began to feel sleepy. He put the three iron caps on his head, folded his hands, dragged his feet, and when there was need, rolled along the ground.

Somehow he managed to keep awake and found himself at a tall post.

When Croon-Cat saw Andrei she growled and snarled and jumped off the post straight on to his head. She broke the first cap, she broke the second, and was going for the third when Andrei caught her with the tongs, dragged her down to the ground and fell to trouncing her with the rods. First he whipped her with the iron rod; the iron rod broke, so he flogged her with the copper rod; that one broke too, so he laid about him with the tin one.

The tin rod bent but did not break—it only curled round her body. As Andrei flogged away Croon-Cat told him fairy-tales about priests, about deacons, and priests' daughters. But Andrei turned a deaf ear and flogged away with might and main.

That was more than Croon-Cat could stand, and, seeing that her evil spell did not work, she began to plead with him.

"Let me go, good man!" she said. "I will do anything you like."

"Will you go with me?"

"Anywhere you like."

Andrei turned homewards and took the Cat with him. When he came to his own country he went to the palace with the Cat and said to the Tsar:

"I have fulfilled the task and brought Croon-Cat to you."

The Tsar could not believe his eyes.

"Come, Croon-Cat, show me fire and fury," he said.

At that the Cat began to sharpen her claws and glare at the Tsar, and made ready to rip open his breast and tear the living heart out of him.

The Tsar was terrified.

"Do calm her, Andrei," he said.

Andrei quieted the Cat and locked her up in a cage, then he went home to Princess Maria. The two of them went on living happily together, but the Tsar grew more lovesick than ever. One day he called his Councillor again.

"You must think of some other way to get rid of Andrei the Archer. If you do not, I'll out with my sword and off with your head."

The Tsar's Councillor went straight to the tavern, sought out the ragamuffin, and asked him to help him out of his trouble. The ragamuffin tossed off his glass of wine, wiped his whiskers, and said:

"Go and tell the Tsar to make Andrei the Archer *go I know not where and fetch I know not what.* This task Andrei will never be able to fulfill, and so he will never come back."

The Councillor ran off to the Tsar and told him everything, word for word. The Tsar sent for Andrei.

"You have done me two services, now do me a third," he said. "*Go I know not where and fetch I know not what.* If you do this, I shall reward you handsomely, if you do not, I'll out with my sword and off with your head."

Andrei went home, sat down on the bench and wept.

"Why are you so sad, my dear?" asked Princess Maria. "What is the matter this time?"

"Ah," said he, "your fair face will be my ruin. The Tsar has commanded me to *go I know not where and fetch I know not what.*"

"Now that is a difficult task indeed. But never mind, go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

When midnight came Princess Maria opened her book of spells. She read it through and through, then flung it aside and clutched her head. The book did not tell her how to fulfil the Tsar's task. She went out on to the door-step, took out a handkerchief and waved it. All kinds of birds and all sorts of beasts came flocking and running.

"Hail, Beasts of the Forest, Birds of the Skies!" she said to them. "You beasts prowl everywhere, you birds fly everywhere—perhaps you can tell me how to *go I know not where and fetch I know not what?*"

And the birds and beasts answered:

"Nay, Princess Maria, we cannot tell you that."

Princess Maria waved the handkerchief again, and the birds and beasts vanished as if they had never been. She waved it a third time, and two Giants appeared before her.

"What is your wish? What is your will?"

"My faithful servants, carry me to the middle of the Ocean-Sea."

The Giants caught up Princess Maria, carried her to the Ocean-Sea and stood in the middle of the deep waters. There they stood like two tall columns, holding her up in their arms. Princess Maria waved her handkerchief and all the fishes and crawling things of the sea came towards her.

"Fishes and Crawling Things of the Sea, you swim everywhere and know all the islands—perhaps you can tell me how to *go I know not where and fetch I know not what?*"

"Nay, Princess Maria, we have never heard of such a place."

Princess Maria grew sad and told the Giants to take her home. They caught her up, carried her to Andrei's house and set her down on the door-step.

Next morning Princess Maria was up betimes to see Andrei off on his journey. She gave him a ball of yarn and an embroidered towel.

"Throw the ball of yarn in front of you and follow it wherever it rolls," she said. "And take care to wash yourself wherever you are and not to wipe yourself with any towel but the one I gave you."

Andrei said good-bye to Princess Maria, bowed in all four directions and passed through the town gates. He threw the ball of yarn in front of him, and it rolled on and on, and Andrei went after it.

The tale is short in telling, but the deed is long in doing. Many a kingdom and strange land did he pass. The ball rolled on and the yarn unwound till it got quite small, no bigger than a hen's egg; at last it got so small you could hardly see it in the roadway. Andrei came to a forest and saw a little hut standing on hen's feet.

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please," said Andrei.

The hut turned round, Andrei went in and saw an old hag sitting on a bench spinning tow.

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to? I will roast you alive, eat you up and take a ride upon your bones."

"Come, come, old Baba-Yaga, fancy eating a wayfarer!" said Andrei. "A wayfarer is lean and tough. Heat the bath first, wash me and steam me, then eat me up."

So Baba-Yaga heated the bath-house. Andrei washed and steamed himself and got out his wife's towel to dry himself.

"How did you come by that towel?" asked Baba-Yaga. "My daughter embroidered it."

"Your daughter is my wife. It was she who gave me the towel."

"Ah, welcome, dear son-in-law, welcome!"

Baba-Yaga bestirred herself and set all kinds of food, wines and good things upon the table. Andrei sat down without any fuss and fell to work. Baba-Yaga sat down next to him and asked him how he had come to marry Princess Maria and whether they were happy together. Andrei told her everything, and how the Tsar had sent him *he knew not where to fetch he knew not what.*

"If only you would help me, Mother!" he said.

"Ah, my dear son-in-law, even I have not heard of so strange a place. The only one who knows this is an Old Frog, and she has been living in the marsh these three hundred years. But never mind, go to bed; night is the mother of counsel."

Andrei went to bed, and Baba-Yaga took two birch brooms, flew to the marsh and called:

"Old Mother-Hopper, are you still alive?"

"I am."

"Then hop out of the marsh."

The Old Frog hopped out of the marsh and Baba-Yaga said:

"Do you know where *I know not what* is?"

"I do."

"Then be so kind as to tell me where it is. My son-in-law has been sent *I know not where to fetch I know not what.*"

"I would show him the way myself, but I am too old, it is a long hop," said the Frog. "Let your son-in-law put me into a jug of fresh milk and carry me to the Flaming River. There I shall tell him."

Baba-Yaga took Old Mother-Hopper, flew home, poured some fresh milk into a jug and put the Frog in it. Early next morning she woke Andrei up.

"Here is a jug with the Frog in it," she said. "Get dressed, mount my horse and go to the Flaming River. There you will leave the horse and take the Frog out of the jug. She will tell you where to go."

Andrei dressed, took the jug and got on to Baba-Yaga's horse. It is hard to say how long they rode, but at last they came to the Flaming River. Across that river no beast could jump, no bird could fly.

Andrei got off the horse, and the Frog said:

"Take me out of the jug, my lad. We must cross the river."

Andrei took the Frog out of the jug and set her on the ground.

"Now climb on to my back."

"Oh, but you are so tiny, Mother-Hopper, I will squash you."

"Have no fear of that. Sit down and hold fast."

Andrei sat down on Old Mother-Hopper, and she began to puff herself up. She swelled and she swelled until she was as big as a haycock.

"Are you holding fast?" she said.

"Yes, Mother."

Old Mother-Hopper swelled and swelled again until she was as big as a haystack.

"Are you holding fast?"

"Yes, Mother."

Again she swelled and swelled until she was taller than the dark forest. Then in one hop she was across the Flaming River. She set Andrei down on the other side and became her own little self again.

"Follow that path, lad, and you will see a tower that is not a tower, nor a hut, nor a barn, but a bit of each. Go inside and stand behind the stove. There you will find *I know not what.*"

Andrei went down the path and saw an old hut that was not a hut. It had no windows or door-step, but was enclosed by palings. So in he went and hid behind the stove.

By and by there was a din and clatter in the woods, and in came Hop-O'-My-Thumb with a beard like a crumb, and bawled out: "Hi, Brother Naoom, I'm hungry!"

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a table appeared from nowhere, and on the table stood a barrel of beer and a roasted ox with a knife stuck into it. Hop-O'-My-Thumb sat down before the ox, pulled out the sharp knife and began to cut the meat, sprinkle it with garlic and polish it off with gusto.

He ate up every bit of the ox and drank the whole barrel of beer.

"Hi, Brother Naoom, clear away the leavings!"

And all at once the table vanished as if it had never been there, bones, barrel and all. Andrei waited until Hop-O'-My-Thumb went out, then he came out from behind the stove, plucked up courage and called:

"Brother Naoom, give me something to eat."

Scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a table appeared from nowhere, and on it stood all kinds of food and wine and good things.

Andrei sat down at the table and said:

"Sit down, Brother Naoom, let us eat and drink together."

And an unseen voice answered:

"Thank you, good man. Many a year have I served here, yet never have I been given so much as a burnt crust, while you seat me at your table."

Andrei was dumbstruck. There was no one to be seen, yet the food vanished as if swept up with a broom; the wines and meads poured themselves into glasses and the glasses went hopetty-hop on the table.

"Brother Naoom, let me see you!" said Andrei.

"Nay, I am not to be seen. I am *I know not what.*"

"Brother Naoom, would you like to serve me?"

"Indeed I would. You are a kind man if ever there was one."

When they had finished eating, Andrei said:

"Clear the table and come with me."

Andrei went out of the hut and looked round.

"Are you here, Brother Naoom?"

"Yes. Do not be afraid, I shall never leave you."

By and by Andrei came to the Flaming River, where the Frog was waiting for him.

"Well, my lad," said the Frog, "did you find *I know not what*?"

"Yes, Mother-Hopper."

"Get on to my back."

Andrei got on to her back again and the Frog began to puff herself up, then gave a hop and carried him across the Flaming River.

He thanked Mother-Hopper and went on his way. He would go on a bit, then turn round and ask:

"Are you here, Brother Naoom?"

"Yes. Do not be afraid, I shall never leave you."

Andrei walked and walked, and at last he grew weary and footsore.

"Oh, dear," said he, "how tired I am!"

"Why did you not tell me before?" said Brother Naoom. "I could have got you home in no time."

Andrei was caught up by a fierce wind and whisked away over mountains and woods, over cities and villages. They even flew over a deep sea, and Andrei got frightened.

"Brother Naoom, I should like to have a rest," he said.

The wind dropped at once and Andrei began to fall into the sea. But where only blue waves had been splashing, he now saw an island, and on that island stood a palace with a golden roof and a beautiful garden all around it. Brother Naoom said to Andrei:

"Rest, eat, drink, and keep an eye on the sea. Three merchant ships will come sailing by. Hail them and invite the merchants to dinner and feast them royally—they have three marvels. Exchange me for those marvels—do not be afraid, I shall come back again."

It is hard to say how much time passed, but at last three ships came sailing from the West. The seafarers saw the island, and on it the palace with the golden roof and the beautiful garden all around it.

"What wonder is this?" they said. "Many a time have we sailed here, and never have we seen anything but the blue waves. Let us go ashore!"

The three ships cast anchor, and the three merchants got into a light boat and made for the island. Andrei the Archer was already there to greet them.

"Welcome, dear guests."

The more the merchants saw, the greater was their wonder. The roof on the palace blazed like fire, birds sang in the trees and wonderful animals hopped about on the paths.

"Tell us, good man, who built this wonder of wonders here?"

"My servant, Brother Naoom, built it in a single night."

Andrei led the guests into the banquet hall.

"Hi, Brother Naoom, serve us something to eat and drink!"

All of a sudden, a table appeared from nowhere set with all the foods and wines the heart of man could desire. There was no end to the merchants' surprise.

"Let us make an exchange, good man," said the merchants. "Give us your servant, Brother Naoom, and take any marvel you wish in exchange."

"Very well. What marvels can you offer?"

One merchant took a cudgel out from under his coat. All one had to say was: "Now then, cudgel, break that man's bones for him!" and

the cudgel would set to work and break the bones of any man, no matter how strong he was.

Another merchant took an axe out from under his *caftan* and stood it on its handle, and the axe began to chop. Rap, tap—out came a ship; rap, tap—out came another one, all complete with sails, and guns and brave sailors. The ships sailed, the guns fired and the brave sailors asked for orders.

He turned the axe upside down and lo!—the ships vanished as if they had never been.

The third merchant took a reed pipe out of his pocket and blew upon it. And lo!—an army appeared, mounted and on foot, with rifles and cannon. The army marched, the bands played, the banners waved, and the horsemen galloped asking for orders.

Then the merchant blew into the other end of the pipe, and—toot-toot!—everything disappeared.

"I like your marvels," said Andrei the Archer, "but mine is worth more. If you wish, I shall exchange Brother Naoom for all three of your marvels."

"Are you not asking too much?"

"Not at all. It is that or nothing."

The merchants thought it over: "What do we want with a cudgel, an axe and a pipe? It would be better to exchange them for Brother Naoom; then we shall have all we want to eat and drink, night or day, without lifting a finger."

So the merchants gave Andrei the cudgel, the axe and the pipe, and shouted:

"Hi, Brother Naoom, you are going with us! Will you serve us truly?"

"Why not?" came a voice. "It is all one to me whom I serve."

So the merchants went back to their ships and made merry. They ate and drank and kept shouting:

"Step lively, Brother Naoom, bring us this, bring us that!"

They drank until they were dead drunk and dropped off to sleep where they sat.

And the Archer sat all by himself in the palace and felt miserable. "Dear me," he thought, "I wonder where my faithful servant, Brother Naoom, is?"

"Here I am. What do you wish?"

Andrei was delighted.

"Is it not time to go home, back to my young wife? Take me home, Brother Naoom."

And again a whirlwind caught him up and carried him to his own country.

Now the merchants woke up, feeling sick and thirsty.

"Hi, Brother Naoom!" they shouted. "Give us something to eat and drink, step lively!"

But they called and shouted in vain. They looked, and lo!—the island was gone. Only the blue waves splashed where it had stood.

The merchants were furious. "What a bad man to have cheated us so!" they said. But there was nothing they could do about it, so they set sail and went on their way.

Meanwhile Andrei the Archer flew home and alighted beside his hut. But where his hut had been there was now nothing but a charred chimney.

With drooping head he went to a desolate spot by the blue sea. And there he was sitting and grieving when suddenly a dove came flying up from nowhere. It struck the ground and turned into his young wife, Princess Maria.

They embraced and began asking each other questions and telling what had befallen them.

"Ever since you left home I have been flying about the woods and groves as a dove," said Princess Maria. "Three times the Tsar sent

for me, but they did not find me and so they burnt our little house down."

"Brother Naoom, can you raise a palace by the blue sea?"

"Why not? It shall be done in the twinkling of an eye."

And true enough, before they could look round the palace was ready, and a grand palace it was, much better than the Tsar's. It stood in a great green garden and birds sang in the trees and all kinds of wonderful animals wandered about on the paths.

Andrei the Archer and Princess Maria entered the palace, sat down by the window and talked, gazing at each other fondly. And so they lived without a care in the world for one day, and another, and a third.

Then the Tsar went a-hunting and saw a palace standing by the blue sea where nothing had stood before.

"What knave has built upon my land without my leave?" said he.

Off he sent messengers, who came back and said that Andrei the Archer had built that palace and was living in it with his young wife, Princess Maria.

The Tsar was angrier than ever, and he sent messengers to find out whether Andrei had been *I know not where and fetched I knou not what.*

The messengers ran off, then came back and reported:

"Yes, Andrei the Archer has bene *I know not where and fetched I know not what.*"

This sent the Tsar into a towering rage. He had his troops mustered and sent down to the sea, and commanded that the palace be razed to the ground and Andrei the Archer and Princess Maria be put to a cruel death.

Andrei saw what a powerful army was coming against him, so he whisked out his axe and stood it on its handle. Rap, tap, went the axe, and a ship stood upon the sea; rap, tap, and there was another

ship. The axe went rap-tap a hundred times till a hundred ships sailed upon the blue sea.

Andrei got out his pipe and blew it—and an army appeared, mounted and on foot, with rifles, cannon and flying banners.

The captains galloped up and awaited orders. Andrei ordered them to begin battle. The bands started playing, the drums rolled and the regiments moved off. The foot soldiers broke the ranks of the Tsar's army, and the horsemen galloped about taking prisoners. And the fleet of a hundred ships turned its cannon on the Tsar's town.

When the Tsar saw his troops fleeing, he rushed forward to stop them. At this Andrei got out his cudgel.

"Now then, cudgel, break the Tsar's bones for him!"

And off the cudgel went with a hop and a skip across the field. It caught up with the Tsar and struck him on the forehead and he fell down dead.

And that was the end of the battle. The people flocked out of the town and begged Andrei the Archer to become Tsar.

Andrei had no objections. He gave a grand feast, and together with Princess Maria he ruled the tsardom to the end of his days.

LITTLE IVAN THE CLEVER YOUNG MAN

Once upon a time there was an old man and his wife. The old man hunted game and wild fowl, and that was all they had to live on. Many a year did they live, but they never gained any wealth. And the old woman sorrowed and grieved.

"What a wretched life we've led—never a good thing to eat or drink, never a fine dress to put on. And we've no children, either, no one to take care of us in our old age."

"Don't grieve, old woman," the old man soothed her. "While I've my two hands to work and my two feet to carry me, we'll have enough to eat somehow. And let's not guess about to-morrow."

So he said and went off to hunt.

All that day from morning till night the old man walked and walked through the woods, but not a bird or a beast could he kill. He did not like to go home empty-handed, but what could he do? And the sun was already setting—time to turn homewards!

And he had just started off, when there came a flapping of wings, and out of the bushes close by flew a bird of wondrous beauty.

But by the time he took aim, it was gone.

"Hard luck," the old man sighed, and he peered under the bush where the bird had flown out, and there in a nest lay thirty-three eggs.

"Better that than nothing," said he, and he tightened his girdle and slipped all thirty-three eggs inside his *caftan*. And then he went home.

On and on he walked, till his girdle came loose and one by one the eggs began falling out.

Out falls an egg, and a lad hops out of it, out falls another egg, and out hops another lad. And so thirty-two eggs fell out, and thirty-two lads hopped out of them.

But just then the old man pulled his girdle tight, and one egg—the thirty-third—stayed inside. The old man looked back, and he could not believe his eyes: thirty-two bonny lads followed in his steps, all of them alike to a hair. And they all spoke out in one voice:

"Since you've found us, you're our father, we your sons, now lead us home."

"What a lucky day for me and my old wife!" thought the old man. "Not a baby in all these years, and now there you are—thirty-two sons at one stroke."

They came home, and the old man said:

"Old woman, haven't you sighed and longed for children all these years? Well, here I've brought you thirty-two sons, all bonny lads, too. Now lay the table and feed the boys."

And he told her how he had found them.

The old wife stood there, and she could not say a word. And so she stayed for a while, but then gasped and flew off helter-skelter to lay the table. Just then the old hunter undid his girdle to take off the *caftan*, and out fell the thirty-third egg, and a thirty-third lad hopped out of it.

"Why, where can you be from?"

"I'm Little Ivan, your youngest son."

And then the old man remembered he had really found thirty-three eggs in the nest.

"All right, then, Little Ivan, sit down to supper." But hardly had the thirty-three laddies sat down to eat, when they cleaned up all the old woman's stores. And yet, they got up from the table neither hungry nor full.

The night went by. Next morning Little Ivan said:

"You've found yourself sons, Father, now give us some work to do."

"What kind of work can I give you, lads? My old woman and I, we've never ploughed nor sowed in our life, and we've never kept anything like a horse or plough."

"Well, nothing is nothing, and it can't be helped," said Little Ivan. "We'll have to go to other folk to find work. Now go to the blacksmith, Father, and have us made thirty-three scythes."

While the old man was away at the smithy and had the scythes forged, Little Ivan and his brothers made thirty-three scythe-handles and thirty-three rakes.

When the father came back from the smithy, Little Ivan dealt out the tools and said:

"Come along, brothers, let's find a job and earn money to start life on our own and keep our old mother and father."

Then the brothers said good-bye to their mother and father and set off on their way.

How long they walked it is hard to say, but at last they saw a big city. And out of that city rode the Tsar's Steward. He rode up to them and he asked:

"Ho, my lads, where are you off to, to work or from? If it's to work, follow me, I've a good job for you."

"And what can it be, that job of yours?"

"Nothing too hard," replied the Steward. "You will have to mow the Tsar's forbidden meadows, to dry the hay, to gather it in cocks and to stack it. Who is the leader among you?"

Nobody answered, so Little Ivan stepped forward and said:

"Lead us there and show the work."

So the Steward led them to the Tsar's forbidden meadows.

"Will three weeks be enough for you?" he asked.

"If the weather keeps up, three days are enough," replied Little Ivan.

That pleased the Tsar's Steward.

"Then fall to, my lads," he said, "and don't worry about food and pay; all you need, you will get."

Said Little Ivan:

"Roast us only thirty-three bulls and stand us thirty-three pails of wine and give us a *kalach* apiece. We won't need anything else."

And off rode the Tsar's Steward. The brothers sharpened their scythes and plied them so heartily that they rang. The work went on briskly, and by evening all the grass was mowed. Meanwhile the Tsar's kitchen had sent up their fare: thirty-three roast bulls, thirty-three pails of wine and a *kalach* apiece. So they each ate half a bull and drank half a pail of wine and took half a *kalach*, and then they all tumbled down to sleep.

The next day, when the sun grew warm, the brothers made the hay and gathered it in cocks and by evening had it all stacked. And again they each ate half a bull with half a *kalach* and each drank half

a pail of wine. Then Little Ivan sent one of his brothers to the Tsar's courtyard:

"Tell them to come and see the work."

The brother came back with the Steward, and soon after the Tsar himself came to his forbidden meadows. The Tsar counted all the haystacks and he walked all over his meadows—not a blade of grass could he find left standing.

"So, my lads," he said, "you've made the hay well and in good time. For this take my praises and, over and above, a hundred rubles and a forty-pail barrel of wine. But now there is one more task you will have to do. The hay must be guarded. Somebody has been coming and eating it every year, and we can't even find trace of the thief."

And Little Ivan replied:

"Let my brothers go home, Your Majesty, and I shall guard the hay alone."

The Tsar didn't mind, so the brothers walked off to the Tsar's courtyard and got their money together with a sound supper and a good drink of wine. And after that they set off homewards.

And Little Ivan, he went back to the Tsar's forbidden meadows. And he didn't sleep nights guarding the Tsar's hay, while by day he ate and drank and took his rest at the Tsar's kitchen.

Now, by and by autumn came, and the nights grew dark and long. Once of an evening Little Ivan climbed up to the top of a haystack, burrowed into the straw, and there he lay, wide awake. At the very stroke of midnight it suddenly grew light as day. Little Ivan peered out and what should he see but a Mare with a Golden Mane. She jumped out of the sea and dashed straight up to his haystack. The earth shook under her hoofs, her golden mane streamed in the wind, her nostrils spurted flame, and clouds of smoke poured from her ears.

Up she ran to the haystack and began eating the hay. And Little Ivan the watchman caught his chance and leaped on her back. And away tore the Mare from the stack and off she raced across the Tsar's forbidden meadows. But Little Ivan held on to the mane with his left hand, and he gripped a leathern whip in his right. And a sound whipping he gave that Mare with the Golden Mane as he drove her straight into the moors and mosses.

Long and hard the Mare galloped through those moors and mosses, till at last she sank to her belly in the mire and stopped. She stopped and she spoke these words:

"Well, Little Ivan, you've found pluck to catch me and to keep your seat on me, and you've found pluck to tame me as well. Don't beat me, don't hurt me any more, I shall be your faithful servant."

So off he led her to the Tsar's courtyard and locked her up in a stable, and himself he went to the Tsar's kitchen and tumbled down to sleep. The next day he came to the Tsar and said:

"Your Royal Majesty, I've found out who stole the hay from your forbidden meadows. And I've caught the thief too. Come, have a look at him."

The Tsar saw the Mare with the Golden Mane and oh, how pleased he was!

"Well, Ivan," he said, "though you're called Little, you're a clever young man. From now on, for your faithful service I make you my Chief Groom."

And since then, too, he was nicknamed Little Ivan the Clever Young Man.

And so Little Ivan took up his duties at the Tsar's stables. And he didn't sleep nights looking after the Tsar's horses. And the Tsar's steeds grew daily more smooth and full-bodied. Their coats became glossy as silk and their manes and tails were always well combed and fluffy—a sight to see, indeed.

And the delighted Tsar could not find words enough to praise him.

"Well done, Little Ivan, Clever Young Man! I've never yet had such a splendid groom."

But the old stablemen envied him:

"To be ordered about by a village bumpkin! A fine Chief Groom for the Tsar's stables!"

And they started plotting mischief against him. But Little Ivan went about his work and felt no danger.

At that time an old tavern-haunter of a Beadle came wandering into the Tsar's stable-yard.

"Give me a drop, lads, to cure that headache I caught last night. If you do, I'll set you on the right way to get rid of the Chief Groom."

And the stablemen were only too glad to treat him.

The Beadle emptied the glass and he said:

"Our Tsar is just dying to have the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat. Many fine lads set out on their own, and still more were sent after those wonders, but never a man came back. Now you go to the Tsar and say that Little Ivan the Clever Young Man has boasted he can get them, and without any trouble at all. The Tsar will send him off, and he will never come back again."

The stablemen thanked the Beadle with another glass and they went straight off to the Tsar's front door. And there they stood gossiping under the Tsar's windows. The Tsar caught sight of them standing there and he came out of his palace and asked:

"What are you talking of, good fellows, what do you want?"

"Well, Your Majesty, it's just that Little Ivan the Clever Young Man has boasted he can get the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat. That is why we stand arguing here; some say he can fetch them, and others think it just words."

When the Tsar heard such speeches, his face changed and his hands and feet fell a-trembling.

"Ah," thought he, "if only I could get hold of those rarities! All the other tsars would envy me. And I've sent so many men for them, too, and never a man came back!"

And straightaway he bade his Chief Groom be called.

And as soon as he saw his Chief Groom, the Tsar shouted:

"Waste no time, Ivan, go off and get me the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat."

And Little Ivan the Clever Young Man replied:

"But, goodness me, I've never even heard of them, Your Majesty! Where do you want me to go?"

But the Tsar only flew into a rage and stamped his foot.

"What's all this talk about? You won't obey royal orders? Off you go at once. If you fetch me the things, I'll reward you, if not, I'll out with my sword and off with your head!"

And Little Ivan went away from the Tsar with a heavy heart and a drooping head. And he set to saddling his Mare with the Golden Mane, and she asked him:

"Why so unhappy, Master, is there anything amiss?"

"How can I be happy, when I've been told by the Tsar to fetch him the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat, and I haven't even heard of them."

"Oh well, that isn't so great a trouble," said the Mare with the Golden Mane. "Get on my back and let us go off to the old witch Baba-Yaga and ask her where to find those marvels."

So Little Ivan the Clever Young Man got ready for a long journey. And the last folk saw of him was how he mounted, but no one saw him pass through the gates—he was too quick for that.

How far he rode it is hard to say, but at last he rode into a dense forest, and so dark was it that not a streak of daylight could be seen.

The Mare with the Golden Mane grew lean and Little Ivan himself grew weary. But at last they reached a glade in the woods and saw a little hut on a hen's foot with a spindle for a heel. It kept turning round and round from west to east, so Little Ivan rode up and said:

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please. Not for years will I stay, but to sleep till day."

And the little hut turned its face towards him. Little Ivan tied his Mare to a pole, and he ran up the steps and pushed the door ajar.

And who should he see there but Baba-Yaga, the witch with a broom and a switch, a bony hag with a nose like a snag, her pestle and mortar beside her.

Baba-Yaga caught sight of her guest and croaked:

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

"Is it so you treat a guest, Granny? Bothering him with talk when he's hungry and cold! At home in Russ they'd first let a wayfarer eat and drink and get warm, and give him a rest and a bath, and then start asking who and why."

"O dearie," cried Baba-Yaga, "don't be cross with an old woman, bonny lad. And we're not in Russ, you know. But I'll soon put things to rights."

And she bustled up and got busy. She set the table with food and drink and made her guest welcome, and then she ran out to heat the stove in the bath-hut. Little Ivan the Clever Young Man had a hot steam-bath and Baba-Yaga made him a bed and he lay down to rest, while the witch herself sat down at his bedside and asked:

"Tell me where lies your way, lad? Have you come here of your own free will, or has anyone's ill-will driven you?"

"I've been sent by the Tsar," answered Ivan, "to fetch him the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat. And I'd ever be thankful, Granny, if you told me where to find them."

"Oh yes, sonny, I do know where they are, but they're hard to get. Many a fine lad has gone after them, but never a man came back."

"Well, Granny, what must be, must be, so better help me in my need and tell me where to go."

"Ah well, good lad, I pity you sore, but I see there is nothing to do but to help you. You must leave your Golden Mane here, with me she will be safer, and take this little ball of yarn. To-morrow, when you go out, drop it on the ground and follow where it rolls. It will bring you to my middle sister. Just show her the ball and she will help you in all she can and tell you all she knows. And then she will send you on to our eldest sister."

The next day she woke up her guest before dawn, and she gave him food and drink and saw him out into the yard. And here Little Ivan the Clever Young Man thanked Baba-Yaga and took his leave and set out on his long journey. Sooner said than done, but the ball rolled on, and the lad went following after.

A day he walked, and another, and a third, till the ball rolled up to a little hut on a sparrow's foot with a spindle for a heel. And here the ball stopped, and Little Ivan the Clever Young Man called out:

"Little hut, little hut, turn your back to the trees and your face to me, please."

And the little hut turned round and the lad went up the steps. He opened the door, and a gruff voice met him:

"Ugh, ugh, Russian blood, never met by me before, now I smell it at my door. Who comes here? Where from? Where to?"

Then Little Ivan showed her the ball of yarn, and she cried out in wonder:

"Dear me, so you're not a stranger at all, but a welcome guest sent by my sister. Why didn't you say so at once?" And she set about hustling and bustling, and laid the table with dainties and drinks for her guest, and made him welcome.

"Eat and drink your fill," she said, "and lie down to rest. Then we'll talk about business."

So Little Ivan the Clever Young Man ate and drank his fill and then he tumbled down to rest, while Baba-Yaga, the second witch-sister, sat down at his bedside and asked who and why. And he told her all about who he was, and where he came from, and what he was going for on his long journey. And then she said, did Baba-Yaga:

"The way is not far, but I don't know whether you'll stay alive. The Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat all belong to our nephew Zmei Gorinich, the Dreadful Dragon. Many a fine lad has gone there, and never a man came back, all fell prey to the Dragon. Now, he is the son of our eldest sister, and we'll have to ask her to help you, or you will not come back alive, either. I know what to do. I shall send her my magic messenger the Raven to warn her. But now go to bed and sleep well, for I shall wake you up early to-morrow."

The bonny young lad had a sound night's sleep, and early in the morning he got up, washed himself and ate the meal Baba-Yaga had cooked for him. After that she gave him a ball of red wool and took him out to show the way, and here they said good-bye to each other. And the ball rolled forward and Little Ivan the Clever Young Man followed after it.

So he walked and he walked from sunrise to sunset and from sunset to dawn. When he grew weary he took up the ball and sat

down to eat a crust of bread and drink a drop of spring water, and then he went on further.

By the end of the third day the ball stopped at a big house, and that big house was built on twelve stones and was propped by twelve pillars. All around the house stood a tall paling.

A dog barked, and Baba-Yaga, the eldest witch-sister, ran out on the porch. She quietened the dog, and said:

"Come, bonny lad, I know all about you. My sister's magic messenger the Raven has been here. I'll find a way to help your woes and needs. But come in and have some food and drink, you must be tired out and hungry with your travels."

And she showed him in and she gave him food and drink to his heart's content.

"Now you must hide—my son Zmei Gorinich is coming soon. He is always very cross and hungry when he's back, so I fear he may gobble you up." And she opened a trap-door and said to him: "Go down into the cellar, Little Ivan, and sit there till I call you up."

And scarcely had she closed the trap-door, when there came a terrible racket and noise. The door burst open, and in flew Zmei Gorinich, with such a din that the very walls shook.

"I can smell a Russian smell here," he roared.

"O no, sonny, how can there be a Russian smell, when it's years since ever a grey wolf prowled or a bright falcon flew here. It is you yourself have been flying about the wide world and brought the smell with you."

So she said and busied with the table. She pulled a roast three-year-old bull from the oven and she fetched a pail of wine from the pantry. And Zmei Gorinich drained the pail at a single draught and he gobbled up the roast bull for a snack, and then he became more cheerful.

"Ah, Mother, who could I have some fun with now, who could I play cards with?"

"I could find you someone to play cards with and to have fun with, but I fear you will harm him."

"Then call him in, Mother, and have no fear. I won't harm anyone, I'm just dying for a game of cards, for some fun now."

"Well, son, mind your words," answered Baba-Yaga and she went and lifted the trap-door.

"Come up, Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, do your host a favour and play cards with him."

And down they sat at the table, and Zmei Gorinich said:

"Let us play so: the winner eats up the loser."

All night they played, and Baba-Yaga helped her guest, so by the first light of morning Little Ivan had won the game.

And then Zmei Gorinich begged him:

"Stay another while with us, that I may win back."

And then he flew off. Meanwhile, Little Ivan the Clever Young Man had a sound sleep and got a good meal from Baba-Yaga.

At sundown Zmei Gorinich returned, and he ate another roast bull, drank a pail and a half of wine and then said:

"Well, now let's sit down and play, and I'll win my own back."

But Zmei Gorinich hadn't slept all that night and had flown about the world all day, so soon he became drowsy. And Little Ivan with Baba-Yaga's help won again. And then Zmei Gorinich said:

"Now I must fly off on business, but we shall have a third game in the evening."

Little Ivan the Clever Young Man had a good rest and he slept well, while Zmei Gorinich hadn't slept for two nights and had flown all over the wide world, and come home quite tired out. He ate a roast bull and he drank two pails of wine and called his guest:

"Sit down, bonny lad, and I'll win my own back."

But he was so weary and drowsy that soon the bonny lad won the game for the third time.

Zmei Gorinich got very frightened, and he fell on his knees and begged mercy:

"Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, don't eat me up, don't kill me. I shall do you any service you like." And then he fell on his knees before his mother and begged her too:

"Tell him to spare me, Mother!"

And of course that was all Little Ivan wanted.

"All right, Zmei Gorinich. I've won three games of you, but if you give me three wonders: the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat, we shall call it a bargain."

Zmei Gorinich laughed out with joy, and he set to hugging his guest and his old mother Baba-Yaga.

"With all my heart!" he cried. "I can get myself still better ones."

And they had a mighty feast and Zmei Gorinich treated Little Ivan handsomely and called him brother. He even offered to carry him home.

"Why should you tramp on foot and carry the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat? I can take you where you need in a twinkling."

"That's right, sonny," said Baba-Yaga. "Take your guest off to my youngest sister, your aunt. And don't forget to call on your other aunt on the way back. It's quite a time since they both saw you."

The feast came to an end, and Little Ivan took up his marvels. Then he said good-bye to Baba-Yaga, and Zmei Gorinich caught him up and soared into the blue sky. Before an hour passed they landed beside the hut of the youngest Baba-Yaga. The mistress of the hut ran out to the porch, and very glad she was to see them.

Little Ivan the Clever Young Man didn't waste time but saddled his Mare with the Golden Mane. And then he took leave of the youngest Baba-Yaga and her nephew Zmei Gorinich and started back to his own tsardom.

By and by Little Ivan came home and brought all the wonders safe and sound. Now, just then the Tsar was having guests: three tsars with their tsareviches, three kings with their princes, and ministers and boyars besides.

The bonny lad came into the chamber and he handed the Tsar the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat. And wasn't the Tsar pleased!

"Well, Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, you have done me a fine service this time. Take my praises and your reward for it. Until now you were Chief Groom. From this day I make you my Councillor."

But the boyars and ministers twitched their noses and muttered to each other:

"A groom to sit among us! Such disgrace! What does the Tsar think he is doing?"

But here the Self-Playing Psaltery struck up a tune, the Glee-Maker Cat sang out and the Dancing Goose made his first steps. And there began such merriment that none of the noble guests could sit, but all went dancing.

Time went by, but still they danced and danced. The kings' and tsars' crowns slid off to one side, and their princes and tsareviches wheeled round and round in a gay squatting dance. The boyars and ministers sweated and gasped, but none could stop. And at last the Tsar waved his hand and begged:

"Stop it, Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, finish the fun. We are all tired out!"

So the bonny lad put the three marvels away in a bag and all fell quiet.

And all the guests dropped down where they could and sat puffing and gasping.

"Dear, wasn't that a treat, wasn't that merry? Did you ever see the like of it?"

And the foreign guests all envied the Tsar, while the Tsar himself was pleased as pleased could be.

"Now all the tsars and kings will burst with envy. None of them has such wonders as these," thought he.

But his boyars and ministers sat muttering to each other:

"If this goes on, we'll soon have the bumpkin first man in the tsardom, and he'll give all the state offices to his bumpkin kinsmen. And he'll drive us, noblemen, to death if we don't get rid of him."

And so the next day the boyars and ministers got together and sat thinking of a means of doing away with the Tsar's new Councillor. They thought and they thought, till at last one old prince suggested:

"Let us call the drunken Beadle, he's an old hand at such things."

And in the drunkard came and he bowed and said:

"Your honours, ministers and boyars, I know what you want me for. If you stand me a half-pail of wine, I'll teach you how to get rid of the Tsar's new Councillor."

"Speak up," said the boyars and ministers, "and the half-pail is yours."

They gave him a cupful for a start and the Beadle drank it and he said:

"It is forty years since our Tsar became a widower. Since then he has many times tried to woo the Beautiful Princess Alyona, but always failed. Three times he waged war on her tsardom and lost ever so many troops, but even by force he could not win her. Let him send Little Ivan the Clever Young Man after the Beautiful Princess Alyona. Once he is gone, he will never come back."

The boyars and ministers took heart, and when morning came they went to the Tsar.

"How wise you were, Your Majesty, to find such a splendid Councillor! It was no easy task to get the wonders he brought, but now he boasts he can carry off and bring you the Beautiful Princess Alyona."

When the Tsar heard the name of the Beautiful Princess Alyona, he couldn't sit still, but jumped off his throne.

"What an idea!" cried he. "Why didn't I think of it before! He is the very man to send after the Beautiful Princess Alyona."

So he called his new Councillor and said:

"Go off at once beyond the Thrice-Nine Lands to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom and fetch me the Beautiful Princess Alyona."

And Little Ivan the Clever Young Man replied:

"But, Your Majesty, she is not the Self-Playing Psaltery, or the Dancing Goose, or the Glee-Maker Cat. You can't stuff her into a bag. And besides, she might not even want to come here."

But the Tsar stamped his feet and shook his beard and waved his hands.

"Don't you argue with me! I won't hear anything. Bring her any way you like. If you do bring the Beautiful Princess Alyona, I shall give you a city to rule, with all the lands round it, and shall appoint you minister. But if you don't—I'll have your head cut off!"

Deep in sad thought was Little Ivan when he left the Tsar. He saddled his Mare with the Golden Mane, and she asked him:

"Dear Master, why are you so sad and thoughtful? Has any trouble or bad luck come to you?"

"There's no big trouble, but there's nothing to be pleased with, either. I am sent by the Tsar to fetch him the Beautiful Princess Alyona. He himself spent three years wooing her and failed, and he

waged three wars to win her and he could not, and me he sends to fetch her all alone."

"Oh well, that's not so great a trouble," said the Mare with the Golden Mane. "I'll help you, and we'll manage somehow."

Little Ivan didn't take long to get ready, and soon was off. And the last that folk saw was how he mounted—none were quick enough to see him leave.

How long he rode is hard to say, but at last he came to the Thrice-Ten Kingdom and a strong paling blocked his way. But his Mare with the Golden Mane leapt over it easily, and the bonny lad found himself in the Tsar's forbidden garden. And then the Mare with the Golden Mane said:

"I shall turn myself into an apple-tree with golden apples, and you must hide beside me. To-morrow the Beautiful Princess Alyona will come out for a walk, and she will want to pluck a golden apple. Now, don't you stand around when she's near, but seize her and I'll be ready at hand. Don't lose a minute then—climb on my back and we'll be off. And mind, if you blunder, we'll both be dead."

The next day the Beautiful Princess Alyona came out into the forbidden garden for a walk. And she saw the apple-tree with its golden fruit and cried out to her nurses, handmaids and chambermaids:

"Oh, look what a lovely apple-tree! And its apples all gold! Stay there and wait till I go and pluck one."

Up she ran, and Little Ivan jumped out as if from nowhere and he seized the Beautiful Princess by the hands. And that very minute the apple-tree turned back into the Mare with the Golden Mane, and she beat the ground with her hoofs and hurried him up. And the bonny lad leaped into the saddle and that was the last the nurses, handmaids and chambermaids saw of them.

The women raised a shriek, the guards ran in, but there was no Princess to be found. When the Tsar came to hear of it he sent out

horsemen in hot pursuit along every road. But they all came back empty-handed the very next day. They had ridden their horses to death but had not even caught sight of the Princess and her kidnapper.

Meanwhile Little Ivan the Clever Young Man had galloped through many lands and left many lakes and rivers behind him.

At first the Beautiful Princess Alyona struggled to get free, but then she gave it up and began weeping. She'd weep a bit, then she'd look at the lad, she'd weep again, and she'd look once more. On the second day she began to speak to him:

"Tell me, stranger, who are you and where from? Which is your native land, and who are your kinsmen, and what is the name you are called by?"

"My name is Ivan, and they call me Little Ivan the Clever Young Man. I come from the Tsardom of So and So, and my father and mother are peasants."

"Say then, Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, have you kidnapped me for yourself or by anyone's orders?"

"It was the Tsar who ordered me to fetch you," said he.

The Beautiful Princess Alyona wrung her hands and she cried:

"Never in my life shall I marry that old fool! He kept wooing me for three years and couldn't woo me, he waged three wars against my tsardom and lost a host of troops and couldn't win me, and he will not have me now, either."

These words well pleased the bonny lad, but he said nothing and only thought to himself:

"What if I had a wife like that!"

By and by his own land came in sight. The old Tsar had spent all these days at the window watching for Little Ivan to appear. As the bonny lad came near the city, the Tsar already stood waiting for him at the palace front door. He had hardly come into the yard,

when the Tsar scuttled down the steps and lifted the Beautiful Alyona from the saddle and took her by the white hands.

"All these years," he said, "I've been sending my men and coming myself to woo you, and you've always refused. But this time you will have to marry me."

Alyona smiled a little smile and replied:

"You might let me rest from the journey, Your Majesty, and then start talking of marriage."

So the Tsar bustled up and got busy and he called the nurses, handmaids and chambermaids:

"Is everything ready for my welcome guest in her chamber?"

"Long ago, Your Majesty."

"Well, know then that she is to be your Tsaritsa, so obey her in all and let her lack nothing!"

Then the nurses, handmaids and chambermaids took the Princess and led her off to her chamber. And the Tsar said to Little Ivan the Clever Young Man:

"Well done, Ivan! For this service you shall be my Prime Minister and I shall reward you with three cities and all the land round them."

A day passed and another and the Tsar grew ever more restless. He was just longing to get married. And so he came and asked Alyona the Beautiful Princess:

"For what day shall we call the guests, when shall we go to church?"

But she replied:

"How can I be married when I haven't my wedding-ring and carriage with me?"

"Oh, if it's that," said the Tsar, "I have plenty of carriages and rings in my tsardom, quite a good choice of them. But if you don't find any to your heart, we can send a messenger to fetch them from the lands beyond the sea."

"No, Majesty, I won't go to church in any but my own carriage and I won't be married with any but my own ring."

So the Tsar asked:

"And where may they be, your wedding-ring and your carriage?"

"My ring is in my travelling trunk, my travelling trunk in my carriage, and my carriage near the island of Buyan, deep under the sea, that is where my wedding-ring and carriage be. And until you get them, better not talk of marriage."

The Tsar took off his crown and scratched the back of his head.

"But how am I to get your carriage from the bottom of the sea?"

"That's not my care. Do it any way you like."

And off she swept to her own chamber.

And the Tsar was left sitting alone. He sat and sat and thought and thought till he remembered Little Ivan the Clever Young Man.

"There's who will get me the ring and the carriage!"

So he sent straight for Little Ivan and said to him:

"Now, my faithful servant Little Ivan, Clever Young Man, listen to what I say. No one but you could get me the Self-Playing Psaltery, the Dancing Goose and the Glee-Maker Cat. You it was, too, who got me the Beautiful Princess Alyona. Now do me a third service—bring me her wedding-ring and carriage. The ring lies in her travelling trunk, the travelling trunk in her carriage, and her carriage—near Buyan Isle below the sea, and you must fetch them all for me. If you get me the ring and the carriage, I shall make you lord over a third of my tsardom."

Said Little Ivan the Clever Young Man:

"But, Your Majesty, I'm not a whale-fish, am I? How could I go down to the sea bottom for her ring and carriage?"

The Tsar grew angry, stamped his feet and cried:

"None of that talk, now! Who's the Tsar here, you or I? It's my job to order and yours to obey! Bring the things, and the reward is yours; if you don't—off with your head!"

So the bonny lad went off to the stables. And he saddled his Mare with the Golden Mane, and she asked:

"Is it far you are going, Master?"

"I don't know myself yet, but I have to go, anyhow. The Tsar has ordered me to fetch the Princess' ring and carriage. The ring lies in her travelling trunk, her travelling trunk in her carriage, near Buyan Isle, below the sea, and after them are going we."

And the Mare with the Golden Mane said:

"This will be a harder job than any other we have yet done. It's not far to go, but may end in woe. I know where the carriage stands, but it is not easy to get it. I shall go down to the sea bottom and hitch myself to the carriage and pull it out. If the Sea-Horses don't get me, I'll be safe, but if they do, you will never see me or the carriage."

Little Ivan the Clever Young Man fell a-thinking. He thought and he thought, till at last he found a way out.

And then he went to the Tsar.

"Majesty," he said, "I need twelve ox-hides, twelve *poods* of tarred rope, twelve *poods* of tar and a cauldron."

"Take anything and as much as you want," said the Tsar, "only hurry up with the business."

So the bonny lad loaded the ox-hides, the rope and the big cauldron of tar on a cart, hitched on his Mare and set out.

By and by they came to the sea-coast, to the Tsar's forbidden meadows. And here he fell to covering his Mare with the hides and fastening them with the rope.

"If the Sea-Horses catch sight of you, they will not bite through so soon."

He wrapped on all the twelve hides and used all the twelve *poods* of rope to fasten them. Then he heated the tar and poured it on top—all twelve *poods* of it.

"Now I needn't be afraid of the Sea-Horses," said the Mare with the Golden Mane. "Sit here on the meadows and wait for me three days. Play your psaltery and don't close your eyes."

And she plunged into the sea and vanished under the water.

And Little Ivan the Clever Young Man stayed all alone on the seashore. One day passed, and another passed, and still he kept awake, playing his psaltery and peering at the sea. But on the third day he felt drowsy and began dozing off—even the psaltery couldn't help him. He struggled and struggled as long as he could, but at last he gave in to sleep.

He hadn't slept long, or maybe he had, when he heard the clatter of hoofs and looked up. And who should he see but his Mare jumping on the shore and pulling the carriage behind her. Six Sea-Horses with Golden Manes clung fast to her sides.

Little Ivan the Clever Young Man ran up to meet her, and the Mare with the Golden Mane said:

"If you hadn't covered me with the ox-hides and tied and tarred them, you would never see me now. They dashed at me in a whole herd, those Sea-Horses. Nine hides they bit to pieces and two others got all torn. And these six Sea-Horses got their teeth stuck so fast in the ropes and tar that they couldn't break loose. But that is all right, you will find them useful."

So the bonny lad tethered the Sea-Horses, pulled out his whip and set about teaching them reason. And as he beat them he said:

"Will you take me for master? Will you obey me? If you won't, I shall flay you alive and throw your bodies to the wolves."

Then the Sea-Horses fell on their knees and begged mercy:

"Don't beat us, don't maim us any more, bonny lad, we shall obey your every word and serve you faithfully, and if you come to trouble, we shall help you out."

So Ivan left off beating them, hitched all seven to the carriage and dashed up to the Tsar's front door. His Mare and the Sea-Horses he led off to the stables and himself he went to the Tsar.

"Take the carriage, Majesty, it's standing at your porch with all the dowry inside."

But the Tsar didn't even say thanks to him. Out he rushed straight to the carriage, caught up the trunk and carried it off to the Beautiful Princess Alyona.

"Well, Alyona, Beautiful Princess, I have fulfilled all your wishes and whims. Here are your ring and trunk, and the carriage stands waiting outside. Say now, when shall we hold the wedding, for what day shall we call the guests?"

But the Beautiful Princess replied:

"Marry I shall, and we can have the wedding soon. But I shouldn't like you to be so old and grizzly on our wedding-day. What will people say? They'll surely laugh at us: 'Look at that grizzly old man marrying a young girl! Doesn't he know that the young wife of an old husband welcomes anyone but himself?' And gossips' mouths are too many to stop, you know. If you grow younger before we marry, all will be well."

And the Tsar said:

"I would gladly grow younger, but you must teach me how. It's a thing unheard of in our tsardom."

So Alyona the Beautiful Princess told him:

"You must find three big copper cauldrons and fill one with whole milk and the others with spring water. The milk and one of the cauldrons with water should be heated, and just as they start boiling, you

jump into the milk, then into the hot water and last into the cold. And when you have dipped your whole body into all three cauldrons, you will come out as young and handsome as at twenty."

"But won't I get scalded?" asked the Tsar.

"In my tsardom there are no old people at all. Everyone does so, and no one ever got scalded."

So the Tsar went and had everything made ready as Alyona had told him. But when the milk and water became seething hot he again couldn't make up his mind and got afraid. And so he walked round and round the cauldrons, till suddenly he slapped his forehead:

"What am I thinking of? Let Little Ivan the Clever Young Man have a bathe first and then I'll see. If it's all right, I shall dive in myself. If not, and he gets scalded, there's no one to cry, either. All his horses will be mine, and I won't have to share my tsardom with him as I promised."

And so he summoned Little Ivan the Clever Young Man.

"What do you want, Your Majesty? You ought to know I'm just back from a journey and need rest."

"I will not hold you long—just take a dip in these cauldrons and then go rest."

Little Ivan looked into the cauldrons. The two with the milk and water were seething hot, and only in the third was the water calm and cool.

"You don't want to boil me alive, Your Majesty?" he said. "Is that your reward for my faithful service?"

"Oh no, Ivan. You see, if an old man takes a bath in them he becomes as young and handsome as at twenty."

"I'm not so old as it is, Your Majesty, and I don't need to get any younger."

The Tsar began losing his temper.

"Dear me, what a cross-grained fellow you are! Always arguing! If you don't jump in of your own free will, I'll have you driven in. I see you want to taste the rack, my lad!"

But just then the Beautiful Princess Alyona came running out from her chamber and she caught a chance and whispered unnoticed:

"Make it known to your Mare with the Golden Mane before you dive in. Then you may bathe without fear."

And to the Tsar she said:

"I came to see if everything was made ready for you as I told." And she went up to the cauldrons and looked in.

"I see it is all as it should be," she said. "Have your bathe now, and I will run off to get ready for the wedding."

And off she went to her chamber.

Little Ivan shot a look at the Tsar and said:

"All right, I'll please you once more, for the last time. Nobody has two deaths to meet, but there's one that nobody can cheat. Only let me go and have a last look at my Mare with the Golden Mane. It may be the last time I see her, and we've travelled so much together."

"Go on, but don't be long there."

So Little Ivan went to the stables and told everything to his Mare and Sea-Horses.

"When you hear us snort three times," said they, "dive in and fear nothing."

Then Ivan went back to the Tsar.

"I'm quite ready now, Your Majesty," he said, "I'll dive in this minute." And he heard the horses give three snorts: one, two, three—and splash!—went the bonny lad into the hot milk. Then he dived out and plunged into the hot water, and last he dipped into the cold. And he came out of the third cauldron as handsome as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that was ever born.

The Tsar saw him and he stopped wavering. Up he scrambled on to the platform and plunged into the milk, and there he was boiled.

Alyona the Beautiful Princess hurried-scurried down from the porch and took Little Ivan by the white hands and slipped her ring on his finger.

Then she smiled her little smile and said:

"You carried me off by order of the Tsar, but he is no longer alive, so now you may do as you will: if you want, you may take me back, and if not, you may keep me for yourself."

And Little Ivan the Clever Young Man took her by the white hands and called her his own and slipped his ring on her finger.

And soon after that he sent messengers to his village to call his mother and father and his brothers to the wedding-feast. And in a short while the thirty-two bonny lads, his brothers, and his mother and father came to the palace.

The wedding was held and the feast came to an end, and Little Ivan with his beautiful wife began a happy life together and took care of Mother and Father.

EMELYA AND THE PIKE

Once upon a time there lived an old man who had three sons, two of them clever young men and the third, Emelya, a fool.

The two elder brothers were always at work, while Emelya lay on the stove ledge all day long with not a care in the world.

One day the two brothers rode away to market, and their wives said:

"Go and fetch some water, Emelya."

And Emelya, lying on the stove ledge, replied:

"Not I. I don't want to."

"Go, Emelya, or your brothers will bring no presents for you from the market."

"Oh, all right then."

Down climbed Emelya from the stove, put on his boots and *caftan*, and, taking along two pails and an axe, went to the river.

He cut a hole in the ice with his axe, scooped up two pailfuls of water, put down the pails and himself bent down to look into the ice-hole. He looked and he looked and what did he see but a pike swimming in the water. Out shot his arm, and there was the pike in his hands.

"We'll have some fine pike soup for dinner to-day!" he exclaimed, delighted.

What was his surprise when the pike suddenly spoke up in a human voice and said:

"Let me go, Emelya, and I'll do you a good turn, too, some day."

But Emelya only laughed.

"What good turn could you do me? No, I think I'll take you home and tell my sisters-in-law to make some soup. I do so love pike soup."

But the Pike fell to begging him again and said:

"Do let me go, Emelya, and I'll do anything you wish."

"All right," Emelya replied, "only first you must prove you aren't trying to dupe me."

Said the Pike:

"Tell me what you want, Emelya."

"I want my pails to go home all by themselves without spilling a drop of water."

"Very well, Emelya," the Pike said. "Whenever you wish something, you have only to say:

" 'By will of the Pike, do as I like,' and it will all be done at once."

And Emelya, nothing loath, said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Off you go home, pails, by yourselves!"

And lo and behold! the pails turned and went up the hill. Emelya put the Pike back into the ice-hole and himself walked after his pails.

On went the pails along the village street, the villagers stood round and marvelled and Emelya followed the pails, chuckling. The pails marched straight into Emelya's hut and jumped up on the bench, and Emelya climbed up on the stove ledge again.

A long time passed by and a little time, and his sisters-in-law said to Emelya:

"Why are you lying there, Emelya? Go and chop us some wood."

"Not I. I don't want to," Emelya said.

"If you don't do what we say, your brothers will bring no presents for you from the market."

Emelya was loath to leave the stove ledge. He remembered the Pike and said half under his breath:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Go and chop some wood, axe, and you, wood, come inside the house and jump into the stove."

And lo! the axe leapt out from under the bench and into the yard and began to chop the wood, and the logs filed into the hut all by themselves and jumped into the stove.

A long time passed by and a little time, and his sisters-in-law said to Emelya:

"We have no more wood, Emelya. Go to the forest and cut some."

And Emelya, lolling on the stove, replied:

"And what are you here for?"

"What do you mean by that, Emelya?" the women said. "Surely it's not our business to go to the forest for wood."

"But I don't much want to do it," Emelya said.

"Well, then you won't get any presents," they told him.

There was no help for it, so Emelya climbed down from the stove and put on his boots and *caftan*. He took a length of rope and an axe, came out into the yard and, getting into the sledge, cried:

"Open the gates, women!"

And his sisters-in-law said to him:

"What are you doing in the sledge, Fool? You haven't harnessed the horse yet."

"I can do without the horse," Emelya replied.

His sisters-in-law opened the gate and Emelya said half under his breath:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Off you go to the forest, sledge!"

And lo and behold! the sledge whizzed out through the gate so swiftly that one could scarcely have caught up with it even on horseback.

The way to the forest lay through a town, and the sledge knocked down and crushed many people. The townsfolk cried: "Hold him! Catch him!" But Emelya paid no heed and only urged the sledge on to go the faster. He came to the forest, stopped the sledge and said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Cut some dry wood, axe, and you, faggots, climb into the sledge and bind yourselves together."

And lo and behold, the axe began to hack and split the dry wood and the faggots dropped into the sledge one by one and bound themselves together. Emelya then ordered the axe to cut him a cudgel, so heavy that one could scarcely lift it. He got up on top of his load and said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Off you go home, sledge!"

And the sledge drove off very fast indeed. Emelya again passed through the town where he had knocked down and crushed so many people, and there they were all ready and waiting for him. They seized him, pulled him out of the sledge and began to curse and to beat him.

Seeing that he was in a bad plight, Emelya said half under his breath:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Come, cudgel, give them a good thrashing!"

And the cudgel sprang up and lay to, right and left. The townsfolk took to their heels and Emelya went home and climbed up on the stove again.

A long time passed by and a little time, and the Tsar heard of Emelya's doings and sent one of his officers to find him and bring him to the palace.

The officer came to Emelya's village, entered his hut and asked him:

"Are you Emelya the Fool?"

And Emelya replied from the stove ledge:

"What if I am?"

"Dress quickly and I shall take you to the Tsar's palace."

"Oh, no. I don't want to go," Emelya said.

The officer flew into a temper and struck Emelya in the face. And Emelya said half under his breath:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Come, cudgel, give him a good thrashing."

And out the cudgel jumped and beat the officer to within an inch of his life.

The Tsar was much surprised to learn that his officer had not been able to get the better of Emelya and he sent for the greatest of his nobles.

"Find Emelya and bring him to my palace or I'll have your head chopped off," he said.

The great noble bought a store of raisins and prunes and gingerbread, and then he came to the selfsame village and entered the selfsame hut and asked Emelya's sisters-in-law what it was Emelya liked best.

"Emelya likes to be spoken to kindly," they said. "He will do anything you want if only you are gentle with him and promise him a red *caftan* for a present."

The great noble then gave Emelya the raisins, prunes and gingerbread he had brought, and said:

"Please, Emelya, why do you lie on the stove ledge? Come with me to the Tsar's palace."

"I'm well enough where I am," Emelya replied.

"Ah, Emelya, the Tsar will feast you on sweetmeats and wines. Do let us go to the palace."

"Not I. I don't want to," Emelya replied.

"But, Emelya, the Tsar will give you a fine red *caftan* for a present and a cap and a pair of boots."

Emelya thought for a while and then he said:

"Very well, I shall do as you ask. Only you must go on alone and I shall follow by and by."

The noble rode away and Emelya lay on the stove a while longer and then said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Off you go to the Tsar's palace, stove!"

And lo! the corners of the hut began to crack, the roof swayed, a wall crashed down and the stove whipped off all by itself into the street and down the road and made straight for the Tsar's palace.

The Tsar looked out of the window and marvelled.

"What is that?" he asked.

And the great noble replied:

"That is Emelya riding on his stove to your palace."

The Tsar stepped out on his porch and said:

"I have had many complaints about you, Emelya. It seems you have knocked down many people."

"Why did they get in the way of my sledge?" said Emelya.

Now, the Tsar's daughter Princess Maria was looking out of the palace window just then, and when Emelya saw her, he said half under his breath:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Let the Tsar's daughter fall in love with me."

And he added:

"Go home, stove!"

The stove turned and went straight to Emelya's village. It entered the hut and went back to its place, and Emelya lay on the stove ledge as before.

Meanwhile, there were tears and wails in the palace. Princess Maria cried her eyes out for Emelya. She told her father she could not live without him and begged him to let her marry Emelya. The Tsar was much troubled and grieved and he said to the great noble:

"Go and bring Emelya here, dead or alive. Do not fail, or I'll have your head chopped off."

The great noble bought many kinds of dainties and sweet wines and set off for Emelya's village again. He entered the selfsame hut and he began to feast Emelya royally.

Emelya had his fill of the good food and the wine and, his head swimming, he lay himself down and fell asleep. Then the noble put the sleeping Emelya into a cart and rode off with him to the Tsar's palace.

The Tsar at once ordered a large barrel bound with iron hoops to be brought in. Emelya and Princess Maria were placed into it and the barrel was tarred over and cast into the sea.

A long time passed by and a little time, and Emelya awoke. Finding himself in darkness and closely confined, he said:

"Where am I?"

And Princess Maria replied:

"Sad and dreary is our lot, Emelya my love! They have put us into a tarred barrel and cast us into the blue sea."

"And who are you?" Emelya asked.

"I am Princess Maria," came the reply.

Said Emelya:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Come, o wild winds, cast the barrel on to the dry shore and let it rest on the yellow sand!"

And lo and behold! The wild winds began to blow, the sea became troubled and the barrel was cast on to the dry shore and it rested on the yellow sand. Out stepped Emelya and Princess Maria, and Princess Maria said:

"Where are we going to live, Emelya my love? Do build us a hut of some kind."

"Not I. I don't want to," Emelya replied.

But the Princess begged and begged and at last he said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like! Let a palace of stone with a roof of gold be built!"

And scarcely were the words out of his mouth when a stone palace with a roof of gold rose up before them. Round it there spread a green garden, where flowers bloomed and birds sang. Princess Maria and Emelya entered the palace and sat down by the window.

Said the Princess:

"Oh, Emelya, couldn't you become handsome?"

And Emelya did not think long before he said:

"By will of the Pike, do as I like. Change me into a tall and handsome man."

And lo! Emelya turned into a youth as fair as the sky at dawn, the handsomest youth that was ever born.

Now about that time the Tsar went hunting and he saw a palace where one was never seen before.

"What dolt has dared to build a palace on my ground?" he said, and he sent his messengers to learn who the culprit was.

The Tsar's messengers ran to the palace, stood under the window and called to Emelya, asking him to tell them who he was.

"Tell the Tsar to come and visit me, and he shall hear from my lips who I am," Emelya replied.

The Tsar did as Emelya bade. Emelya met him at the palace gate, led him into the palace, seated him at his table and feasted him royally. The Tsar ate and drank and marvelled.

"Who are you, my good fellow?" he asked at last.

"Do you remember Emelya the Fool who came to visit you on top of a stove?" Emelya said. "Do you remember how you had him put in a tarred barrel together with your daughter Princess Maria and cast into the sea? Well, I am that Emelya. If I choose, I can set fire to your whole tsardom and level it with the ground."

The Tsar was very frightened and he begged Emelya to forgive him.

"Have mercy on me, Emelya," he said. "You can have my daughter in marriage and you can have my tsardom."

Then such a feast was held as astonished the world by its magnificence. Emelya married Princess Maria and began to rule the realm, and they both lived happily ever after.

And that is my faithful tale's end, while he who listened is my own true friend.

NIKITA THE TANNER

A Dragon once appearing near Kiev, he took a heavy tribute of the townsfolk. Every household had in turn to furnish him with a lovely maid. And every maid the Dragon was thus served with, he devoured.

The time came for the Tsar's daughter to go to the Dragon, who seized the Tsarevna and dragged her off to his den. But so beautiful was she that he would not eat her and took her to wife instead. Whenever he went out on business, the Dragon blocked up the entrance to his den with logs that the Tsarevna might not escape.

Now, the Tsarevna had a little dog that had trailed after her upon her leaving her father's house. This little dog now served the Tsarevna

loyally. The Tsarevna would write a note to her father and mother and tie it round the dog's neck, and off the dog would run and bring back an answer besides. One day the Tsar and the Tsaritsa sent the Tsarevna a message, begging her to learn who there was in the world stronger than the Dragon.

The Tsarevna now pretended to be fond of the Dragon and spoke to him sweetly, desiring him to reveal his secret. The Dragon at first saying nothing, he at last told her that there lived in Kiev a tanner by the name of Nikita, who was more than his match in strength. The Tsarevna then wrote to her father, the Tsar, telling him to seek out Nikita the Tanner in Kiev and send him to obtain her liberty.

His daughter's message arrived, the Tsar sought out Nikita the Tanner and himself went to beseech him to free his land from the wicked Dragon and deliver the Tsarevna from captivity.

When the Tsar came to Nikita's house, Nikita was tanning skins and he had twelve of them in his hands. On beholding the Tsar, he began to tremble with fear, his hands shook and he tore the twelve skins. The fright he had had and the loss of the skins so enraged Nikita, that, plead as the Tsar and Tsaritsa might, he could on no account be prevailed on to go to deliver the Tsarevna.

It was then agreed to get together five thousand children of tender age, all of them orphaned by the wicked Dragon, and send them to beg the Tanner to rid the Russian land from the monster's baneful presence.

The orphans came to Nikita and they beseeched him with tears in their eyes to go against the Dragon. Nikita's heart filled with pity at the sight of their tears. He took some hemp, three hundred *poods* of it, and he tarred it. Then he twined it round his body to protect himself from the Dragon's teeth and he went forth against him.

Nikita came to the Dragon's den, but the Dragon bolted himself within and would not come out.

"Come out and meet me in the open field, else will I level your den with the ground!" the Tanner cried and, without more ado, he began to break in the door.

The Dragon seeing himself so menaced, he came out and met Nikita in the open field.

Whether their combat was long or short is hard to say, but at length the Dragon was worsted and he fell to the ground, crying for mercy.

"Kill me not, Nikita," he cried. "There is none stronger than you and me in all the world. Let us then divide the earth into two halves: you will live in one half and I in the other."

"Aye, so be it," the Tanner agreed. "But first must we lay the boundary."

Nikita then making a wooden plough that weighed three hundred *poods*, he harnessed the Dragon to it and began to plough a furrow.

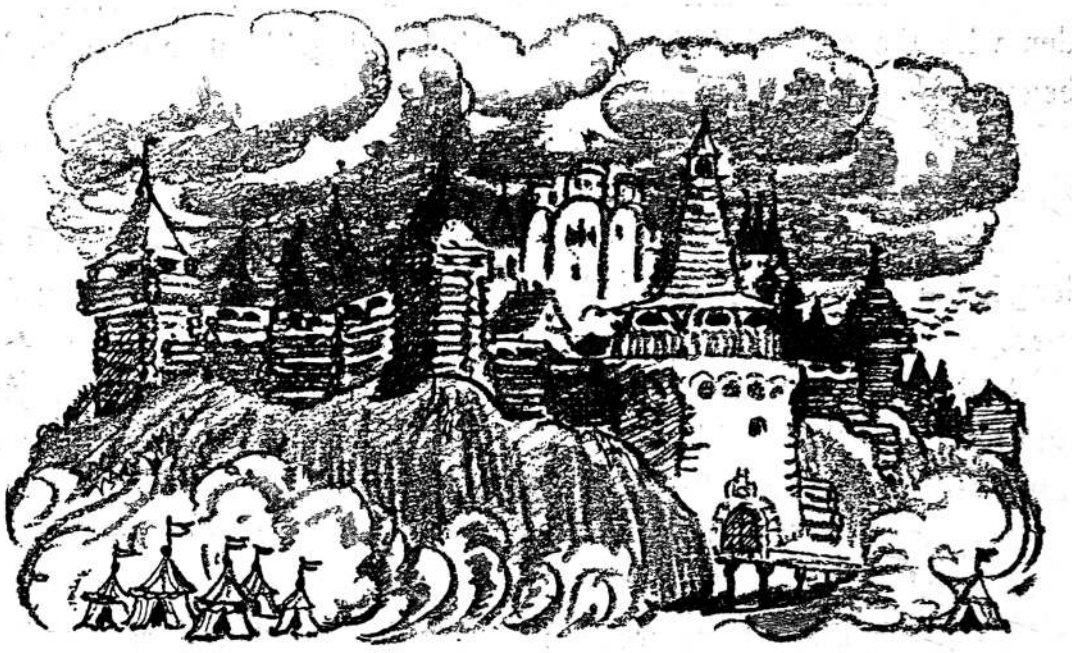
The boundary passed from Kiev to the Kaustrian Sea.

"Well," quoth the Dragon, "now have we divided all the land."

"Aye, that we have," Nikita replied. "But now must we divide the sea as well or I fear me you will say that I am taking your water."

This agreed upon and the Dragon gaining to the middle of the sea, Nikita then slew him and sank his carcass in the sea.

His sacred mission thus accomplished, Nikita the Tanner went back to tanning skins, taking no reward for what he had done.



ILYA OF MUROM'S FIRST BOUT

Many, many years ago, near the town of Murom, in the village of Karacharovo, there dwelt a peasant named Ivan Timofeyevich with his wife, Yefrosinia Yakovlevna. And they had an only son named Ilya.

One day Ilya fitted himself out for the road and hied him to his father and mother.

"Dear parents," he said, "let me off to Kiev, the city of the realm, to join Prince Vladimir. I will serve my native Russ truly and staunchly and defend the Russian soil against our foes."

Whereupon old Ivan, his father, said:

"For good deeds I do bless thee, but for evil ones I do not. Defend our Russian soil not for the sake of gold or gain, but for the honour of it, for knightly glory. Shed not human blood in vain,

nor cause mothers' tears to flow, and forget not that thou art a peasant, a son of the soil."

Ilya bowed his head to the ground before his father and mother and went to saddle his steed, Shaggy Tan. He put the saddle-cloth on the horse, and on the saddle-cloth a strip of felt, and on the felt a Circassian saddle with twelve girths of silk and a thirteenth of iron, made for wear and not for beauty.

Now Ilya had a mind to test his strength.

He rode down to the Oka River, set his shoulder against a high hill that stood upon the bank and pushed it into the river. The hill blocked the bed of the Oka and the river was forced to follow in another course.

Ilya took a crust of rye bread and laid it upon the waters of the Oka River, saying:

"Thou hast kept Ilya of Murom in meat and drink, Mother Oka, and I thank thee for it."

Before leaving he took with him a small handful of his native soil. Then he mounted his steed and flicked his whip.

People saw Ilya mount his steed, but none saw whither and how he went. All they could see was a pillar of dust rising over the field.

At the lash of Ilya's whip Shaggy Tan reared and leapt a *verst* and a half at a single bound. Where the steed's hoofs struck the ground, there a spring of living water gushed forth. Ilya felled a great oak and built a frame of logs over the spring, and upon that frame he inscribed these words: "The Russian *bogatyr* Ilya, son of the peasant Ivan, has passed here."

The spring of running water gushes to this day in its frame of oaken logs, and the bear-beast goes there of a night to drink the cool water, which makes him strong as a giant.

And Ilya sallied forth towards Kiev town.

He took the straight road that runs past the town of Chernigov. As he came within sight of Chernigov he heard a great uproar at its walls. Tatars by the thousand were besieging the town. The dust and the steam from the horses cast a gloom upon the earth and hid the bright sun in the sky. So dense were the Tatar ranks that not even a dun hare could have slipped through, nor a bright falcon flown over them. And from within the town came a wailing and a moaning and a tolling of funeral bells. The townsfolk had shut themselves up in the stone cathedral, and there they wept, and prayed, and prepared to meet their death, for Chernigov was beset by three Tatar princes, each with a host of forty thousand strong.

Ilya's heart took fire. He reined in Shaggy Tan, tore a green oak out of the earth, roots and all, and flung himself upon the Tatars. He laid about him with the oak-tree and trampled the enemies under his horse's hoofs. He swung the tree here, and lo! a passage was cleared, he waved the tree there, and lo! a lane was cleared. Ilya galloped up to the three princes, seized them by their yellow locks and spoke to them in this wise:

"Hearken, ye Tatar princes! Shall I take you captives, or cut off your heads? Little time have I to be bothered with captives; I am on the road, not sitting at home, and the bread in my saddle-bag will not suffice to feed idle mouths. Yet would it be small honour for *bogatyr* Ilya of Murom to cut off Tatar heads. So ride off with your hordes and spread the tidings among all our foes that Russ, my native land, is not empty—it is peopled with doughty *bogatyrs*, and her foes would do well to think of this."

And Ilya rode into Chernigov town. He went into the stone cathedral, and there people were weeping and embracing, preparing to meet their death.

"Good cheer, folks of Chernigov," said Ilya. "Why are ye weeping and embracing, and bidding farewell to this life?"

"What can we do but weep and prepare to die, when three princes have beset Chernigov, each with a host of forty thousand strong?"

"Climb up on the fortress wall and look down upon the plains where the enemy hosts were gathered," said Ilya.

The townsfolk climbed up on the fortress wall and looked, and behold!—the plain was strewn with the bodies of Tatars like a cornfield with ears when a hail-storm has passed.

At that the Chernigovians bowed humbly before Ilya and welcomed him with bread and salt and offerings of silver and gold and rich cloth sewn with gems.

"Bonny youth, gallant Russian *bogatyr*, who are thy kith and kin? Who thy father, who thy mother? What is thy name? Come and be our Chief, here in Chernigov. We shall all do thy bidding, pay honour to thee, and keep thee in meat and drink, and thou shalt live in wealth and fame."

Ilya of Murom shook his head.

"Good folks of Chernigov, I am a Russian *bogatyr*, son of a simple peasant from the village of Karacharovo, near the town of Murom. I have delivered you not for the sake of gain; I care not for silver or gold. I have delivered Russian men, fair maidens, helpless babes and old mothers. I will not be your Chief and I seek not riches. My riches are my strength, and my task is to serve Russ, to defend her against the foe."

Then the Chernigovians besought Ilya to tarry at least a day with them and make merry at the feast, but to this, too, Ilya said nay.

"I may not tarry, good folks. Russ is groaning from the onslaught of enemies, and I must hasten me to Prince Vladimir. Give me some bread for the way, some spring water to slake my thirst, and show me the straight road to Kiev."

The men of Chernigov grew sad and thoughtful.

"Ah, Ilya of Murom, the straight road to Kiev is overgrown with grass. No soul has ridden that road these thirty years."

"How is that?"

"Solovei the Whistler-Robber, son of Rakhman, keeps that road. There he sits on three oaks and nine branches beside the River Smorodinaya. When he whistles bird-like and roars beast-like, all the trees bend to the ground, the flowers drop their petals, the grasses shrivel, and men and horses fall down dead. Thou must take the roundabout way, Ilya. To be sure, the near road to Kiev is three hundred *versts*, the far road all of a thousand."

Ilya of Murom was silent a while, then he tossed his head.

"It ill becomes me, a *bogatyr*, to ride the roundabout way and let the Whistler-Robber keep the road to Kiev. I shall go by the straight untrodden road."

And with that Ilya leapt into the saddle, gave Shaggy Tan a flick with the whip and was gone in a twinkling.

ILYA OF MUROM AND SOLOVEI THE WHISTLER-ROBBER

Hard and fast rode Ilya of Murom. Shaggy Tan sprang from hill to hill, leapt over rivers and lakes and valleys.

At last he came to the forests of Brynsk. Here Shaggy Tan stopped and could go no farther. All around lay bogs and the steed sank into them up to its belly.

Ilya sprang out of the saddle. With his left hand he upbore Shaggy Tan, with his right he tore oak-trees up by the root and laid a log-road through the bog. For thirty *versts* stretched the road, and honest folks are using it to this day.

In this wise Ilya reached the River Smorodinaya.

Broad and wild it flowed, rolling from cliff to cliff.

Shaggy Tan neighed, reared high above the dark forest and took the river in a single bound.

On the other side, upon three oaks and nine branches, sat Solovei the Whistler-Robber. Past those oaks no falcon could fly, no beast could run, no snake could crawl. Everyone was afraid of the Whistler-Robber and nobody wanted to die.

When Solovei heard the clop-clop of hoofs, he raised himself up on the oaks and shouted in a terrible voice:

"What villain rides here, past the forbidden oaks? Who dares disturb the sleep of the Whistler-Robber!"

And suddenly he whistled bird-like, roared beast-like, and hissed snake-like, so that all the earth shuddered, the giant oaks swayed, the flowers dropped their petals and the grass hung limp. Shaggy Tan fell upon his knees.

But Ilya sat his saddle like a rock, and not a hair stirred upon his head. He took a silken whip and struck the horse on the flanks.

" 'Tis a sack of hay thou art, not a *bogatyr*'s steed! Hast thou never heard the peep of a dickey-bird, the hiss of a grass-snake? Up on thy feet and take me to Solovei's nest, or I shall throw thee to the wolves."

At that up sprang Shaggy Tan and galloped to the Robber's nest.

Solovei was so surprised that he thrust his head out of the nest.

Losing no time, Ilya took up his bow and an iron arrow, quite a small one, weighing only a *pood.*

The bow twanged, the arrow flew, pierced Solovei's right eye and flew out of his left ear. Solovei toppled out of his nest like a sheaf of oats. Ilya seized him, bound him tightly with raw-hide thongs and tied him to his left stirrup.

Solovei stared at Ilya, not daring to breathe.

"What art thou staring at, robber? Hast thou never seen a Russian *bogatyr* ere now?"

"Ah, me!" cried Solovei. "I have fallen into strong hands; methinks my days of freedom are over!"

Ilya galloped down the straight road and came to the homestead of the Whistler-Robber. The courtyard was seven *versts* long, in it were seven posts, and on the tip of each post hung the head of a slain *bogatyr*. And in that yard stood a gorgeous palace of white stone with gilded balconies glowing like flame.

Solovei's daughter saw the *bogatyr*'s steed and cried out at the top of her voice:

"Our Father, Solovei Rakhmanovich, is coming home with a yokel tied to his stirrup."

The Robber's wife looked out of the window and flung up her hands.

"What art thou talking about, silly child! 'Tis a yokel a-coming with our dear father tied to his stirrup!"

At that Pelka, the Robber's eldest daughter, rushed out into the courtyard, seized an iron plank weighing ninety *poods* and hurled it at Ilya of Murom. But Ilya had his wits about him. He caught the plank with a mighty hand and flung it back. It smote Pelka, and she fell down dead.

Solovei's wife threw herself at Ilya's feet.

"Good *bogatyr*," she besought him, "take our silver, gold and precious stones, take all thy horse can carry, only let my husband go."

To which Ilya made a reply:

"I take no gifts from evil folk. What thou offerest me is drenched with Russian blood and children's tears; your riches have been wrung from the peasant poor. A robber in one's power always speaks fair,

but let him go and one will live to rue it. Nay, I shall take Solovei with me to Kiev town, and there I shall eat buns and drink *kvass* with the money I get for him."

Ilya turned his horse and galloped off to Kiev. Solovei was silent, he did not stir a limb.

Ilya rode through Kiev town until he came to the Prince's palace. He tied his steed to a carved post, left the Whistler-Robber trussed to the stirrup, and went into the vast halls.

Prince Vladimir sat there feasting, and at tables round about sat Russian *bogatyrs*. Ilya came in, bowed, and stopped at the threshold.

"Good cheer, Prince Vladimir and Princess Apraksia. Have ye a welcome for a newcomer?"

And Vladimir the Bright Sun gave answer:

"Whence come you, good fellow, and what is your name? Who are your kith and kin?"

"My name is Ilya. I am the son of a peasant from the village of Karacharovo, near the town of Murom. I have ridden from Chernigov by the straight road, Prince, and I have brought you the Whistler-Robber, Solovei, son of Rakhman. He is out in your courtyard, tied to my steed. Would you have a look at him?"

At this the Prince and the Princess and all the *bogatyrs* jumped up and hastened into the courtyard after Ilya. They ran up to Shaggy Tan.

And there was the Robber, dangling from the stirrup like a sack of hay, staring at Kiev and at Prince Vladimir out of his left eye.

"Come, now—whistle bird-like, roar beast-like for us!" said Prince Vladimir to him.

But the Whistler-Robber turned away and would not obey.

"It was not you who took me captive, and so it is not for you to give me orders," he said sullenly.

So Prince Vladimir turned to Ilya of Murom and said:

"Order him to do so, Ilya Ivanovich."

"Very well, Prince, but do not blame me for the consequences. I shall cover you and the Princess with the skirts of my peasant's *caftan* lest harm befalls you. And you, Solovei, do as you are ordered."

"I cannot whistle," said the Robber, "my throat is dry."

"Give the Whistler a five-gallon bumper of sweet wine, another of bitter beer, a third of heady mead, with a wheaten loaf for a snack, then will he whistle for our amusement."

Solovei was given food and drink, and he made ready to whistle.

"But mind, robber," said Ilya, "do not whistle with all your strength, but whistle low and roar gently, or else it will go hard with you."

Solovei did not heed Ilya's command—he thought to destroy Kiev town and kill the Prince and Princess and all the Russian *bogatyrs*. He whistled as loudly as he could, he roared a mighty roar, he hissed a piercing hiss.

What an uproar there was!

House-tops toppled sideways, balconies fell away from walls, window-panes cracked, horses ran out of their stables and all the *bogatyrs* fell down and crawled about the courtyard on all fours. Prince Vladimir, more dead than alive, stood swaying behind the skirts of Ilya's *caftan*.

Ilya was very angry.

"I told you to amuse the Prince and Princess, and see what you have done!" he said to the Robber. "Now I will settle with you. No more shall you grieve fathers and mothers, no more shall you turn

widow young wives and orphan little children, no more shall you loot and kill."

And Ilya took a sharp sword and cut off Solovei's head. And that was the end of the Whistler-Robber.

"Thank thee, Ilya of Murom," said Vladimir the Prince. "Join my retinue. Thou shalt be my first *bogatyr*, more esteemed than all others. And make Kiev thy home till the end of thy days."

DOBRINYA, SON OF NIKITA, AND ZMEI GORINICH

Once there lived near Kiev a widow named Mamelfa Timofeyevna. She had a son whom she loved dearly, a *bogatyr* by the name of Dobrinya. All of Kiev sang the praises of Dobrinya: tall he was and graceful of person, brave in battle and merry at a feast and well read in books, too. He was of a ready wit and he could compose a song and play on the psaltery. His temper was sweet and gentle, his speech was never rough and never would he use anyone ill without good cause. And that was why he was called Dobrinya the Gentle Heart.

Once, on a hot summer day, Dobrinya was seized with the desire to bathe in the river. He went to his mother Mamelfa Timofeyevna and said to her:

"Give me leave to go to the Puchai River, my mother, and bathe in the cool water, for I am full wearied by the summer heat."

Mamelfa Timofeyevna was much troubled and began to plead with Dobrinya to bide at home.

"Sweet my son, sweet Dobrinya," said she, "go not to the Puchai River. 'Tis a fierce river and a wrathful. It spurts fire from its first stream, it darts sparks from its second stream and it casts smoke from its third stream."

"Very well, my mother," replied Dobrinya, "I shall not bathe in the river. Let me but ride along the bank and breathe of the fresh air."

Mamelfa Timofeyevna gave him leave so to do, and Dobrinya straightway began to prepare for the ride. He donned his travelling dress and his high Greek hat and he took with him his lance, his bow and arrows, his sharp sword and his lash.

He seated himself on his good steed, called on his young servant to attend him, and set out on his journey.

An hour passed and another went by and still Dobrinya rode on. The summer sun was hot on his head and, forgetting his mother's behest, Dobrinya turned his horse's head towards the Puchai River.

A pleasing coolness there came from the river.

Dobrinya alighted, threw the reins to his young servant and said:

"Tarry here and watch the horse."

Then he doffed his Greek hat and his travelling dress, laid all his weapons on his steed's back and flung himself into the river.

Dobrinya swam in the water and he marvelled:

"Strange that my mother should say what she did about the Puchai River. Fierce 'tis not. 'Tis as calm as a rain-puddle."

But scarcely were the words out of Dobrinya's mouth when of a sudden the sky grew very dark. Not a cloud was there in the sky

and no rain fell, but the thunder crashed. No storm broke, but the lightning flashed.

Dobrinya lifted his head and he beheld Zmei Gorinich, the Dragon of the Mountain, come flying towards him, and a dreadful monster he was. Three heads he had and seven tails and claws of shining copper. From his nostrils spurted flame and from his ears there poured smoke.

The Dragon spied Dobrinya and he roared in a voice of thunder:

"The old folk said that by the hand of Dobrinya, Son of Nikita, would I be slain. But Dobrinya has himself fallen into my hands. I can do with him as I desire: I can eat him alive or I can lead him captive and carry him off to my den. Many Russian men do I hold in thrall. Dobrinya alone have I lacked."

And Dobrinya spoke up in a low voice and said:

"Stay, thou evil Dragon, first must thou take Dobrinya and then boast of thy conquest. Dobrinya is not in thy hands yet."

Now Dobrinya was an excellent swimmer, and he dived down to the very bottom and swam underwater. He dived out again by a steep bank and he climbed out on the bank and hastened to his horse. But not a trace or a sign of the horse did he see. His young servant had galloped off with it. His blood chilled at the Dragon's roar, he had leapt up on the horse and made off in hot haste with all of Dobrinya's weapons.

Dobrinya had naught but his bare hands with which to do battle with the Dragon.

Now the Dragon came thundering upon Dobrinya and he showered him with flaming sparks and he burnt and scorched Dobrinya's white body.

The *bogatyr*'s heart started within him. He cast a look round him, but naught did he perceive to serve him in his trouble: not a club was

there, nor a stone, naught but yellow sand and his Greek hat that was lying idly beside him.

Dobrinya seized the hat and he filled it full with yellow sand, five whole *poods* of it. He swung the hat and smote Zmei Gorinich with it and he broke off one of his heads.

Then he struck at the Dragon with all his might and he threw him down and pinned him to the ground. He was about to break off his other two heads, when Zmei Gorinich spoke up in pleading tones and said:

"Good Dobrinya, brave *bogatyr*, slay me not and let me go free, and I promise to obey all thy commands. A great pledge will I give thee: never to appear in thy land, the great and boundless Russ, nor to lead Russian men captive. Spare but my life, Dobrinya, and harm not my children."

Dobrinya was deceived by the Dragon's crafty speech and, thinking that the wily monster spoke truly, let him go free.

Scarcely did the Dragon soar up to the clouds when he flew at once to Kiev and made straightway for the garden of Prince Vladimir.

Now at that very time Prince Vladimir's niece, young Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, was in the garden taking the air.

When the Dragon beheld the Princess, he was overjoyed. He swooped down upon her from the clouds, seized her in his copper claws and carried her off to the Sorochinsk Mountains.

In the meantime Dobrinya came upon his servant and began to don his travelling dress when of a sudden the sky became overcast and thunder crashed. Dobrinya lifted his head and he perceived Zmei Gorinich flying from Kiev with Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, in his claws.

Dobrinya was sore grieved and sore troubled. He repaired to his home very crest-fallen, and he sat him down on a bench and said not

a word. Seeing him so sad, his mother Mamelfa Timofeyevna thus addressed him:

"Wherefore so melancholy, sweet my son? What ails thee, Dobrinya?"

"Naught ails me, Mother," Dobrinya replied, "and melancholy I am not. But it likes me little to bide at home. Methinks I would do me well to go to the house of Prince Vladimir in Kiev for he holds a merry feast to-night."

"Go not to Kiev, Dobrinya," his mother said. "Go not to the house of the Prince. My heart tells me the visit bodes thee ill. We can hold a feast of our own if thou art so minded."

But Dobrinya heeded not his mother's words, and he set out for Kiev, for the house of Prince Vladimir.

He came to Kiev and he made straight for the chamber of the Prince. The tables were laden with all kinds of dainties, and barrels of sweet mead stood ready, but the guests sat with bowed heads and neither tasted of the food nor drank of the mead.

The Prince went up and down his chamber and invited not his guests to partake of his board. The Princess, his wife, sat with face covered and she looked not at the gathered company.

Now Prince Vladimir spoke up and so he said:

"Sweet my guests, no gay feast is ours, aye, that I know. The Princess, my wife, is sore troubled and no less am I. Zmei Gorinich, may woe betide him, has carried off our dearly loved niece, young Zabava, Daughter of Putiata. Is there anyone amongst you who would go to the Sorochinsk Mountains, seek out the Princess and set her free?"

But no! The guests hid behind one another, the tall ones behind the middling and the middling behind the short and the short closed their mouths and were still.

Of a sudden the young *bogatyr*, Alyosha Popovich, rose from the table and he said:

"Hear me, O Prince the Bright Sun! I was out in the open fields yesterday and I saw Dobrinya the Gentle Heart by the Puchai River. Full friendly he was with Zmei Gorinich and he called him his own sweet brother. Send Dobrinya to the Dragon's den and he will deliver your beloved niece. Surely Zmei Gorinich will give her up to his brother without battle."

Prince Vladimir flared up with rage and he turned to Dobrinya and said:

"If this be so, then do thou mount thy steed, Dobrinya, and make full fast for the Sorochinsk Mountains. There wilt thou seek out my dearly loved niece Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, and free her from captivity. Return not without her, else will I have thy head cut off."

Dobrinya bowed his proud head and he said not a word. He rose from the table, mounted his steed and rode home.

His mother coming out to meet him, she saw at once that something was amiss, so changed was Dobrinya in countenance.

"What ails thee, Dobrinya my son?" she asked. "Wherefore so sad? Has aught befallen thee? Mayhap a wrong was done thee at the feast? Mayhap they passed thee over with the wine cup or seated thee below thy rank and station?"

"Nay, Mother," replied Dobrinya, "no wrong was done me. They passed me not over with the wine cup, and the seat they gave me was one befitting full my rank and station."

"If that be so, wherefore dost thou sit there with downcast head?"

" 'Tis that Prince Vladimir has set me a wondrous heavy task. I am to go to the Sorochinsk Mountains and to seek out and deliver Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, who was carried off by Zmei Gorinich."

Mamelfa Timofeyevna was in great fear, yet she shed not tears and gave not way to her grief, but bethought her what to do.

"Fast to bed with thee, Dobrinya my son," she said, "thou must rest and gain strength. Night is the mother of counsel, so let us hold council on the morrow."

Dobrinya then repaired him to bed and was soon asleep and his snoring came loud as the rush of a stream.

But Mamelfa Timofeyevna went not to bed. She sat her down on a bench and spent all the night long plaiting a lash of seven thongs out of seven different hues.

At the first ray of dawn she awoke her son and thus she spoke:

"Up and awake, my son. Get thee dressed and haste thou to the old stable. The door to the third stall opens not, for 'tis half buried in dung. Thou must push at the door with all thy might and open it, and inside the stall thou wilt see thy own grandfather's steed Burka. He has stood in yon stall these fifteen years and he is knee-deep in dung. Thou must clean and groom him well, feed and water him and bring him to the porch of the house."

Dobrinya went to the stable, he tore the door off the hinges and he brought out Burka. He led him to the porch and he began to saddle him. First he placed a saddle-cloth on his back and on top of the saddle-cloth the felt and on top of that a Circassian saddle embroidered with costly silks and inlaid with gold, and he bound it fast with twelve girths of silk and bridled the horse with a bridle of gold. Then Mamelfa Timofeyevna came out of the house and she gave Dobrinya the seven-thonged lash she had made.

"When thou comest to the Sorochinsk Mountains, Dobrinya," said she, "Zmei Gorinich will be abroad. Thou must fly on thy horse straight at his den and thou must trample down the Dragon's young. They will wind themselves round Burka's legs and thou must bring thy lash down betwixt the horse's ears. Then will Burka leap up and shake the young dragons off his legs and crush them all to death."

A branch broke away from an apple-tree, and an apple has rolled away from it. From his own dear mother her son goes forth to wage bloody battle and fierce.

The passage of days is like the fall of rain, and the passage of weeks is like the rush of a stream. The sun shone golden in the sky as Dobrinya started off, and the moon gleamed silvery and still he rode on. A long way lay before him, but at last Dobrinya reached the Sorochinsk Mountains.

On the mountain was the Dragon's den and the ground all round swarmed with his young. They twined themselves round Burka's legs and they gnawed at his hoofs. Burka could run no more and he fell on his knees. But Dobrinya remembering his mother's behest, he snatched out the lash made of silk of seven different hues and he struck Burka with it between his ears.

Said Dobrinya: "Leap thou high, Burka, and shake the young dragons off thy legs!"

With each blow of the lash Burka gained fresh strength. He began to leap up high and to send the pebbles rolling a *verst* away and to shake the young dragons off. He struck at them with his hoofs and he tore at them with his teeth and he trampled them all to death.

Then Dobrinya alighted and he took his sharp sword in his right hand and his *bogatyr*'s cudgel in his left and he made for the Dragon's Caves.

Scarcely did he take one step when the sky grew dark and thunder crashed. Zmei Gorinich, the Dragon of the Mountain, came flying towards him and he held a dead body in his claws. Tongues of flame darted from his jaws, smoke poured from his ears and his copper claws glowed like fire.

Zmei Gorinich saw Dobrinya and he dashed the dead body to the ground and he roared in a voice like thunder:

"Wherefore didst thou break thy pledge, Dobrinya? Wherefore didst thou trample my children to death?"

"Ah, thou scurvy serpent!" cried Dobrinya. "Was it I who broke my pledge, then? Wherefore didst thou fly to Kiev, Dragon? Wherefore didst thou carry off Zabava, Daughter of Putiata? Thou must deliver her to me without battle. Then will I promise to forget the ill thou hast wrought."

"Never!" roared the Dragon. "Never wilt thou have Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, for I shall eat her up e'en as thee and I shall lead all Russian people captive."

Dobrinya's wrath waxed hot within him, and he threw himself upon the Dragon.

Fierce was the battle these two waged.

The rocks rained down from the Sorochinsk Mountains, huge oaks were uprooted and the grass sank down a whole *arshin* into the ground.

Three whole days they fought and three nights. Zmei Gorinich now gained the upper hand and he hurled Dobrinya up and tossed him to the sky. But Dobrinya remembering his lash, he pulled it out and sent it down between the Dragon's ears. Zmei Gorinich fell on his knees, and Dobrinya pinned him down to the ground with his left hand the while he rained blow after blow on him with the lash he held in his right hand. He struck at him with his silken lash till the Dragon's strength was tamed and spent and then he cut off all of his heads.

The Dragon's black blood gushed from out of him and it poured over the earth from the East to the West and Dobrinya was sunk in it as deep as his waist.

For three days and three nights Dobrinya stood waist-deep in the Dragon's blood till his legs grew numb and the cold struck at his heart. The Russian soil would drink none of the Dragon's blood.

Dobrinya saw his end draw near and he took out his lash made of silk of seven different hues and he struck with it against the ground.

Quoth Dobrinya:

"Come thou asunder, thou sweet earth my mother, and drink up the Dragon's blood!"

And the earth came asunder and it drank up the Dragon's blood.

Dobrinya, Son of Nikita, rested and he washed and he furbished up his *bogatyr*'s armour and then he made for the Dragon's Caves. The caves were closed with doors of copper, they were bolted with bars of iron and they were hung with locks of gold.

But Dobrinya he broke the copper doors and he tore down the locks and the bolts and he entered the first of the caves. Full the cave was of tsars and the sons of tsars, of kings and the sons of kings come from forty strange lands and from forty distant shores, and of plain warriors there were so many that there was no counting them.

Said Dobrinya:

"Hear me, o tsars from strange lands and kings from alien shores and ye plain warriors, too! Come ye out into the light of day and make you off to your own lands, yet forget not the Russian *bogatyr*! Without him would ye still be captives of the Dragon, now and for aye."

One by one they came out into the light of day and they bowed low to Dobrinya and said:

"Never will we forget thee, Russian *bogatyr*!"

And Dobrinya strode on and he opened one cave after another and he let free the captives of the Dragon. Old men there were and young maids, little children and aged women, Russian folk and folk from foreign lands, but Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, was not among them.

Dobrinya passed through eleven caves, but it was in the twelfth that at last he came upon Zabava, Daughter of Putiata. On a dank wall she hung, her hands fettered with chains of gold. Dobrinya tore down the chains and he took the Princess down from off the wall. He gathered her up into his arms and he carried her out of the cave into the light of day.

But Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, swayed on her feet and she shut her eyes for fear of the sun and she looked not at Dobrinya. Then Dobrinya he laid her on the green grass and he gave her food and drink. He covered her with his cape and then he lay him down, too, to rest him.

Now the sun rolled down the sky to meet the night, and Dobrinya awoke and he saddled Burka and woke the Princess. Then he mounted his steed and he put Zabava, Daughter of Putiata, in front of him in the saddle and set off on his journey. Many people there stood all round them, so many there was no counting them, and they all bowed low to Dobrinya and thanked him for obtaining their liberty and then they hastened to their own lands.

And Dobrinya rode to the yellow steppe. There he spurred on his horse and made fast for Kiev with Zabava, Daughter of Putiata.

ALYOSHA POPOVICH, THE PRIEST'S SON

A bright new moon was born in the heavens, when a mighty *bogatyr* was born on earth, in the home of the old cathedral priest Leonty. He was given the name of Alyosha Popovich, a right bonny name indeed.

They began to feed and to foster Alyosha, and he grew in a day as another in a week, as another in a year in a week grew he.

Came the time for Alyosha to walk about and to play about with the little children; if he took someone's hand, it broke straight off, if he touched someone's leg, it broke off too.

Alyosha Popovich he came of age, and he went and begged blessings of his mother and father to ride and to sport in the open fields. And replied his father:

"O my son, Alyosha Popovich, if thou needs must go to the open fields, mind thou—there be men with strength greater than thine, so take thou thyself a way-companion—Marishko, Son of Paran."

The two bonny lads mounted two bonny steeds and hied away to the open fields; the dust rose in a pillar, and away they went in a flash.

Came the bonny lads to the city of Kiev, and there Alyosha Popovich went straight to the white stone palace, to Prince Vladimir. He crossed himself as the Scripture bids, and he made his bows in the learned way, on all four sides, with a bow apart to Prince Vladimir.

And he came forth himself, Prince Vladimir did, and he bade the bonny lads welcome. And he seated them at his oaken table, to feast them well with his meat and wine and to ask their tidings. And the bonny lads they ate of his fancy breads and they drank of his good strong wines.

And then did he ask them, did Prince Vladimir:

"Who may ye be, my bonny lads? Strong *bogatyrs* of prowess, or wandering wayfarers?"

Then answered Alyosha Popovich:

"I be Alyosha Popovich, son of the old cathedral priest Leonty, and this my companion is Marishko, Son of Paran."

He ate and he drank his fill, did Alyosha Popovich, and he lay him down to rest on a stove of brick, while Marishko still sat at the table.

At that time there came unto Prince Vladimir another *bogatyr*, Tugarin, Dragon's Son. And he came into the white stone halls, did Tugarin, Dragon's Son, to Prince Vladimir. His left foot stood on the threshold yet, when his right foot reached the oaken

table. He swilled and he gorged and he hugged the Prince's wife, and he railed and he scorned at Vladimir himself. He laid a whole loaf behind one cheek, and another behind the other he laid, and he laid a whole swan on his tongue, pushed it all down with a pie and down he gulped it at one huge gulp.

As Alyosha lay on the stove of brick, it was thus he spoke to the Dragon's Son:

"Mine old father, Leonty the cathedral priest, had a great big cow, a great big glutton; she would go, that great big glutton of a cow, to the breweries and she would swallow whole barrels full of brewing dregs, and once after that she came to a lake and she lapped up all the water in that lake. And then and there she burst. And I would that thou, Tugarin, shouldst burst at this table too."

Tugarin grew wroth at these words of Alyosha's and he threw at him his dagger of damask steel, but Alyosha Popovich was lithe of limb and he dodged behind an oaken pillar. And he spoke such words, did Alyosha:

"Hearty thanks to thee, *bogatyr* Tugarin, Dragon's Son; thou hast lent me thy dagger of damask steel that I rend thy white bosom for thee and banish the light from thine eyes."

At this Marishko, the Son of Paran, sprang from the table and he seized hold of Tugarin and he hurled him against the white stone wall with such might that the panes of glass came splintering from the windows.

And then spoke Marishko to Alyosha:

"Give thou to me that damask knife, Alyosha, I shall rend the Dragon's Son's white bosom and banish the light from his eyes."

But Alyosha replied:

"Foul thou not these white stone halls, Marishko. Leave him free to go out into the open fields. He will not be able to go very far, and to-morrow in the open fields we shall meet him."

Next morning early as early can be with the sun rose Marishko, Son of Paran, and he led out their fleet steeds to water them at the swift river. And who should he see but Tugarin, Dragon's Son, flying below heaven and calling Alyosha Popovich out into the open fields. Then rode Marishko, Son of Paran, back to Alyosha and thus he spoke to him:

"God be thy judge, Alyosha Popovich. Why didst thou not lend me the damask knife? I should have rent the white bosom of that godless dog and banished the light from his bright eyes. And now what can be had of Tugarin, when he flieth there, beneath the heaven?"

Then Alyosha Popovich he led out his fleet steed, and he put on the steed his Circassian saddle with twelve girths of silk made for wear and not for beauty. And he rode out into the open fields and he saw Tugarin, Dragon's Son, flying beneath the heaven.

And he looked at the sky, did Alyosha Popovich, and he called up a thunder-cloud that it come and wet Tugarin's wings with its rain.

And the great black cloud it rolled overhead, and it poured down in a shower of rain and drenched the wings of Tugarin's steed. And he fell to the earth, did Tugarin, Dragon's Son, and he rode along in the open fields.

It was not two hills that together crashed, but Alyosha Popovich with Tugarin clashed. They lay on with their clubs, and the clubs became split, they fell to with their spears, and the spears became bent, they took to their swords, and the swords became jagged. Suddenly Alyosha lost his seat and he rolled from his saddle like an oaten sheaf. Tugarin then shouted aloud with joy and was about to strike Alyosha, but Alyosha was too nimble for him. He dodged under his horse's belly and turned up from the other side, and he dealt Tugarin a mortal blow with the damask knife right under his pap. He pushed Tugarin from his bonny steed and shouted out to him:

"Hearty thanks to thee, Tugarin, Dragon's Son, for the damask knife! Now shall I rend thy white bosom and banish the light from thy bright eyes."

And he cut off the hot head of Tugarin, did Alyosha, and he bore it off to Prince Vladimir. And he rode with that head and he played with it, and he tossed it high as high in the air and caught it back upon his sharp spear. And Vladimir the Prince he grew frightened.

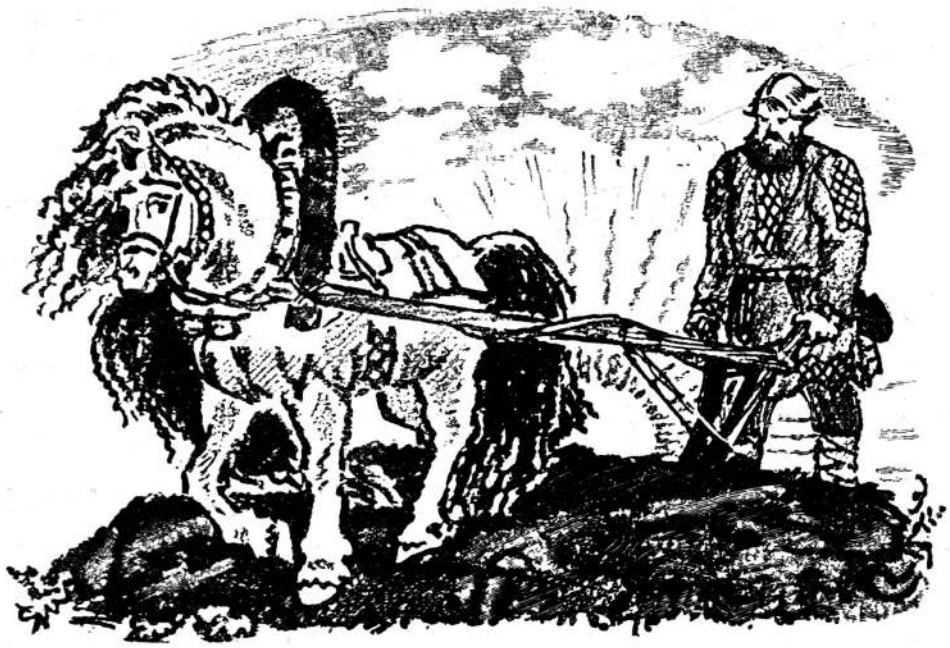
" 'Tis verily Tugarin, Dragon's Son, and he beareth the hot head of Alyosha Popovich. Now will he place all our Russ in thrall."

But then spoke Marishko, Son of Paran:

"Grieve not, O Bright Sun Vladimir, Prince of the realm of Kiev! If he rideth on earth and flieth not on high, that godless dog of a Tugarin, I will have his hot head on my damask spear. So be of good heart, Prince Vladimir."

Then Marishko, Son of Paran, peered through his spy-glass and he knew it to be Alyosha Popovich.

"I know the *bogatyr* by his manner bold, by his gallant gait. He reineth his steed with a mighty hand, he playeth with the head and he tosseth it high, and he catcheth it back on his spear. 'Tis not the godless Tugarin a-coming, but Alyosha Popovich, and he beareth with him the hot head of the godless Tugarin, Dragon's Son.



MIKULA THE PLOUGHMAN

Once of an early, sunny morning Volgá Vseslavyevich set out to collect tax and tribute of the trading towns of Gurchevets and Orekhovets.

His men-at-arms sat them on their goodly steeds, their bay stallions, and set off with him. They came to the open fields, to the wide plains, and they heard a ploughman at work there. They could hear him whistling as he ploughed and the ploughshares scraping against the small stones. He seemed to be somewhere close at hand.

Volgá and his men rode all day, but night set in and still the ploughman was out of sight. Yet they heard him whistling and his wooden plough creaking and the shares grating.

All the next day they rode, but night set in and still the ploughman was nowhere in sight. Yet they heard him whistling and his wooden plough creaking and the shares grating.

The third day drew to a close, and at last Volgá and his men beheld the ploughman. He was tilling the field and calling to his mare and urging her on. The furrows he laid were as deep as moats. He uprooted great oaks with one twist of the hand and he cast aside rocks and boulders as though they were pebbles. His curly locks waved in the wind as he worked, and they rippled like silk over his shoulders.

The ploughman's mare was plain enough and his plough was of maple and his tugs were of silk. Volgá marvelled to see him and he bowed to him and said:

"Good-morrow, gentle stranger, thou honest tiller."

"Hail to thee, Volgá Vseslavyevich. Whither art thou bound?"

"I am bound for the towns of Gurchevets and Orekhovets to collect tax and tribute of the merchant folk."

"Ah, Volgá Vseslavyevich, the merchants in those towns are robbers all. They fleece the poor ploughman and they tax him without mercy for passage over roads. I went thither once to buy me some salt and I bought three sackfuls, each weighing a hundred *poods*, and I laid them on my grey mare's back and hied me home. But the merchants they surrounded me and demanded their toll-money. The more I gave them, the more they would have. Full vexed was I and full wroth and I paid them with my silken lash. He amongst them that stood, can now but sit, and he who sat, can now but lie."

Volgá marvelled to hear these words and he bowed to the ploughman and said:

"Prithee, gentle ploughman, thou true *bogatyr*, come thou with me and be thou my companion."

"That will I, Volgá Vseslavyevich. The merchants must learn they may not use the husbandman ill."

Then the ploughman took the silken tugs off his plough. He unharnessed his grey mare and mounted her and he set out with Volgá and his men.

On they went at a goodly pace and they journeyed half their way to the towns. Said the ploughman to Volgá Vseslavyevich:

"'Tis an ill thing we did, Volgá, this of leaving the plough in the open field. Send thy men-at-arms to pull it out and shake off the earth and lay the plough beneath a broom bush."

And Volgá sent three of his men so to do.

They twisted and turned the plough this way and that, but lift it from the ground they could not.

Then Volgá sent ten of his *bogatyrs* to pull out the plough. Twenty hands they were, and they turned and twisted the plough this way and that, but move it they could not.

Now Volgá turned back with all of his men and they were thirty men but one, and together they took hold of the plough on all sides. They hauled and heaved with all their might, but move the plough they could not, no, not by a hair, though themselves they sank knee-deep in the ground.

Now the ploughman he alighted and he grasped the plough with one hand and he pulled it out of the ground. He shook the earth from the shares, he caught the plough up and he flung it over the broom bush. The plough flew up to the very clouds and it fell to the ground beyond the broom bush and it sank down to its handles in the damp earth.

This done, the *bogatyrs* went their way further and at last they reached the towns of Gurchevets and Orekhovets. But the merchants in those towns were a sly and crafty lot. No sooner did they see the ploughman than they hacked under the logs of the oaken bridge that spanned the Orekhovets River.

Scarcely did Volgá's men ride out on to the bridge when the logs of oak broke under them. Volgá's good men they began to sink, his brave men-at-arms they sank and perished, the men and the steeds they went down to the bottom.

Volgá and Mikula were full vexed and full wroth. They lashed on their goodly steeds and they leaped at a single bound across the river and out on to the shore and they began to mete out justice to the scurvy merchant folk.

Mikula the Ploughman laid about him with his lash and he spake to them in this wise:

"Ah, but you are greedy, merchants. The peasants they give the towns bread and they slake your thirst with sweet mead, but you grudge the peasants even salt."

And Volgá he belaboured the merchants with his cudgel to venge him for the loss of his good men and their *bogatyr* steeds.

Then was it that the trading folk of Gurchevets began to repent them of their misdeeds and to beg for mercy.

"Forgive us our scurvy deeds and our artful ways," said they. "Take thou thy tribute of us and let the ploughman go to buy his salt in peace, not a groat shall we demand of him."

Then Volgá Vseslavyevich collected tribute for twelve years, and the *bogatyrs* went their way home.

Said Volgá to the ploughman:

"Come, tell me, thou Russian *bogatyr*, what is thy name and what thy father's, that I may know how to address thee."

"Come thou with me to my house, Volgá Vseslavyevich," the ploughman replied. "Then wilt thou learn by what name the people honour me."

The *bogatyrs* rode on and they reached the field, and the ploughman pulled out his plough. Then he ploughed the whole wide field and sowed it with golden grain.

The rays of sunset glowed bright in the sky, and already the ploughman's field rustled with rye.

Dark night set in, and he reaped it. In the morning he threshed it, at midday he winnowed it, by dinnertime he milled it and he kneaded the dough and towards evening he called the good folk to an honest feast.

They ate of the pies and they drank of the home-brew and they praised the ploughman.

Said the good folk:

"We thank thee kindly, sweet Mikula the Ploughman!"

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